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IAN HAY, F. BERKELEY SMITH, ELIA W. PEATTIE, MARTHA McCULLOCH WILLIAMS, OWEN OLIVER AND OTHERS 15 CENTS

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Capital,	\$ 2,000,000.00
Liabilities,	14,321,953.11
Assets,	23,035,700.61
Surplus for Policy Holders,	8,713,747.50

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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

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AINSLIE'S

VOL. XXV.

JUNE, 1910.

No. 5.

THE WHOLE QUESTION



CHAPTER I.



TWO men sat arguing in a London lodging house.

"I am thirty-one," said Hillier savagely. "For nine years—nine solid years—I have been writing

plays that nobody wants. I have health, intelligence, and the opportunity to make a living in a rational manner. Very well, I am going to take it!"

"Going to burn your boats!" snapped Crosbie.

"Boats? What boats? How are rejected plays 'boats'?"

"Two of your plays weren't rejected."

"Hole-and-corner productions. And failure at that!"

"You're paying your way at journalism, aren't you?"

"Earning a precarious pittance. What's the use of such journalism as mine to a man who wants to marry?"

"Ah," said Crosbie, "now we're getting at it!"

"Of course, I want to marry; when did I deny it? And if I fiddle on at this fool's game in London, there's no more prospect of making her my wife than there was at the beginning. You amaze

me, Crosbie. I always thought you were a practical chap, you're always gassing about yourself as 'practical,' yet, here you are violently opposing a practical course. Great Scot, isn't it a thousand times more sensible to go abroad and put one's shoulder to the wheel than to stay at home and eat one's heart out? Piece after piece declined! You know what a play means to me—a year's work, from first to last. Each time, I think: 'Well, this one is going to be all right, this time I've done the trick!' And then, the snubs, the refusals, one after another—the same old sickening round, till the hope is dead. And then another play—another year of work; another series of snubs and refusals. By Heaven, I've done with it all! It's no life for a man who has the dearest girl in the world waiting till he can give her a home; it's no life for any man who is offered a chance to make money in a manly way."

Crosbie smoked placidly.

"That's the point," he said. "Are you offered a chance to make money? What does this letter from your uncle amount to? Precisely, what do you take it to mean?"

"My uncle advises me to go out to him. 'Advice is cheap,' you say? Well, he sends a draft for the passage. That isn't so cheap! He's manager of

the Bultfontein Imperial Diamond Mining Company; he can give me a start. And he says that for a fellow with his head screwed on the right way, the Cape swarms with financial opportunities."

"George, how long is it since you met this uncle of yours?"

"Met him? He went out there when I was a youngster. What has that got to do with it?"

"I was wondering," said Crosbie, "whether he would have written in the same strain if he knew you as well as I do. You come of a commercial stock, I believe. You're the only thing in the shape of an artist that the estimable Hilliers ever produced? I'd give long odds that your worthy relative is attributing to you a great deal more business aptitude than Providence has blessed you with. The Cape swarms with financial opportunities, does it? Well, I've been at the Cape, I was on a newspaper there for three years—and I turned out my copy regularly, and drew my pay, and was more or less acutely hard up from start to finish. None of the 'swarm' ever swarmed in my direction. A plodding journalist I went, and a plodding journalist I came back. 'Cos why? 'Cos I haven't the money-making instinct—and no more have you! And you haven't had an ounce of financial training. And you're too old to remodel yourself. And your heart and soul are with the stage; if you go to Kimberley—or Bultfontein, whichever it is—you'll be dreaming of the footlights while you ought to be studying the share market. Look here, we're old pals, and I'm going to speak out! Your idea of chucking your career is just an impatient absurdity that would never have entered your head if you hadn't gone and engaged yourself to Miss Woodward before your position justified you in thinking of marriage at all!"

"I love her," said Hillier through his teeth.

Crosbie sighed. "I had gathered it."

"And she loves me. Let's talk sense. Miss Woodward is to be my wife; that's understood, we needn't discuss

that. The only question is, won't I show more grit by 'burning my boats,' as you call it, than by seeking the bubble reputation, year after year, in London?"

"No. Because you're moving upward. Slowly, but you're moving. If you were a raw hand, it'd be a different thing; Heaven knows I wouldn't counsel any tyro to choose authorship as a profession. *You* are committed to it now. The road mayn't be agreeable, but you can't turn back, I don't pretend to be a dramatist, but I haven't done first-night notices for half a lifetime without being able to recognize technique when I see it, and I tell you that your later plays are the genuine article. I'm not the only one to encourage you, either; the managers themselves are treating you with more respect. They decline you, but they decline you with a vacillation, which, to the experienced eye, is significant. You've fought too long to throw up the sponge now. Perhaps this year—or it may be next year, or the year after that—you'll come into your own. It mayn't be with the best play you have done—it may be with one of the worst—but the public will take those four acts to their bosoms, and you'll stand me champagne, and buy a motor car. One West End success, and the stage doors will be opened to you ever more! Open to you? The managers will be standing on the steps, begging you to come in! You'll be able to place your dreariest drivel."

"I don't want to place my dreariest drivel. I want to see 'All the World Wondered' done."

"There's another proof of what I say! You've had fifty pounds on account of 'All the World Wondered.'"

"For a two years' option! Fine business, that! And the last time I saw him, Erskine as good as told me he never meant to produce the thing; he as good as offered me the 'script back. I'd have taken it, if there had been any other theatre to send it to. There you are! Even if a manager likes a piece when I induce him to read it, he changes his mind about it before he has

an opportunity to put it on. Erskine was jolly keen on 'All the World' when he paid that fifty, in the distant past; if I had had a scrap of a name, I'd have got a couple of hundred then. To-day, he'd rather let his fifty slide than risk producing the play. I am an unknown quantity; so, on second thoughts, to give me a chance would be too 'speculative.' Curse the whole crew, I'm sick of the theatre. I'm going to the Cape!"

"With Miss Woodward's approval?"

"Certainly. And her father's, too. Why shouldn't they approve? Because they're on the stage? That's the best of reasons for their knowing what a rotten reed playwriting is. Woodward regards this offer as the 'chance of my life.' As he says, Bella has been engaged to me for two years, and I'm in just as tight a corner as ever I was. It's only fair to her that I should do the practical thing, Crosbie, whether I'm altogether keen on it, or not."

"Oh! If that's the situation, of course I'm wasting my breath," grunted the other. "When you see Miss Woodward and her father, though, you can tell them that I disagree with their advice from A to Z."

He picked up some proof sheets, and became ostentatiously engrossed by them, but his thoughts were with his companion's mistake, not the composers'. He was fond of George Hillier. They had known more than one London lodging together, had known hopes, and hardships, and the pawnshops together. He was going to be lonely when George went! The little journalist scowled at the proofs with unseeing eyes, and wished for the thousandth time that his friend and Miss Bella Woodward had never met.

CHAPTER II.

"Miss Bella Woodward and Company, in Shakespearean Repertoire" appeared in number two towns, and played to indifferent business there. In the local criticisms she was an "eminent *artiste*"; in reality, she was a disappointed woman.

Her father had been a popular Lon-

don actor, of the robust, tempestuous school that has fallen from fashionable esteem, and as a child she had foreseen herself a star in the West End. Not altogether unreasonably, for she possessed good looks and talent, and Tom Woodward knew all the useful people, and had paid for thousands of drinks in his time. Yet she had proved to be one of the many actresses of promise who don't "get on." Second and third-rate parts in the right houses Woodward's influence had secured for her, but to heroines she could never attain. Slowly and sadly she had realized that among the reigning favorites the name of "Bella Woodward" was never to be numbered; resentfully, she had seen girls with fewer obvious advantages distance her in the race. And when the seventeen-year-old daughter of another player leaped into prominence, and was photographed and interviewed in all the illustrated papers, Miss Woodward had thrown up her arms and cried: "No more West End for me! Better 'lead' in Slocum-on-the-Swamp than obscurity in London!"

She said it passionately, despairingly, as one who accepts the inevitable, and only when the question of ways and means was faced was it apparent to her perception that even Slocum-on-the-Swamp was not waiting for her. The engagements for Woodward himself were by this time few and far between, and she needed ready money in order to take a company on the road. Her project had been accomplished with difficulty, and already threatened to collapse. Though she was no more than seven or eight and twenty, her experience of the theatrical profession had held so much of disappointment that she would have retired into private life with thanksgiving if private life had offered her an independence. It was in these circumstances that a letter from George Hillier had informed her of his uncle's suggestion, and no girl could have been found less likely to bid him reject it.

This week, the Shakespearean Repertoire Company was performing in a London suburb, so there was no need

for Hillier to write to her; he met her every evening at the stage door, instead. He met her on the evening of his conversation with Crosbie, and hated the loafers about the step whose presence prevented his doing more than take her hand.

"Darling!"

"Ah, Georgie, boy!"

"Tired?"

"Tired to death!" she sighed.

"What was the house like?"

"Don't ask me. The tour'll dry up, at this rate! And what am I going to do, then? Ye gods, why was I born an actress, George? Why wasn't I a simpering doll, with a pennyworth of voice and no brains? Then I'd have had a hundred a week—and an income from my picture postcards." Her gesture was rather unrestrained for the streets—one or two passers-by stared at her—but the man who is in love with the histrionic temperament mustn't mind these things. The next instant she forced a smile: "Poor fellow, what a monster of selfishness I am, to give you the blues the moment we meet! What's *your* news? Has your friend been worrying you any more?"

"Crosbie? Oh, Crosbie's still of the same opinion."

"Stick to the writing? Good heavens!" She threw up her beautiful eyes. "Well, why don't you do it? Don't let me 'mar your career'!"

"Bella! Don't talk like that, it hurts!"

"Oh, I suppose you *would* stick to it if we weren't engaged, wouldn't you?"

"We *are* engaged," he said evasively. "And I want to marry you, my love, more than I want anything else on this contrary cuss of an earth. I'd rather have you for my wife than—"

"Than see your name in twelve-inch letters on a poster! I do believe you would! I wonder if—What are you calling that hansom for?" she broke off. "No, I'm going by 'bus to-night, George. I'm not going to let you take a hansom every night—Oh, it is extravagant of you!"

He directed the driver, and in the

cab their hands met again, and lay together.

"You 'wonder'?" he reminded her. "What do you wonder, Bella?"

She laughed nervously. "Never mind!"

"Tell me, dearest," he urged.

"I was just wondering— Oh, what does it matter? Well, I was just wondering whether you'll ever be sorry for giving it all up for me. Perhaps I oughtn't to let you? Perhaps it's a 'situation,' perhaps the Earnest Heroine's influence at this point would be quite different from mine?"

"You *are* the Earnest Heroine," said Hillier, "the only earnest heroine I have any use for. And it's a lot I'm giving up, isn't it? The privilege of sending manuscripts to managers who don't read them. Yes, I'm making a noble sacrifice, give me music in the orchestra, Bella! We're coming to the dark corner, are you going to kiss me this evening, Miss Woodward?"

"If you deserve it, Mr. Hillier." She smiled.

The cab turned out of the flare, and for thirty seconds he held her in his arms.

"There's a good time coming," he said chokily. "Keep up your pluck, my girl!" He kissed her lips, her eyelids, and her sleeve. "I'm going to take you away from all the beastly worries, by and by. I'm going to make heaps of money, and spend my life buying peace for you. Oh, my own, if I could only give you all the happiness I'd like to!"

"Why, the world doesn't hold so much, Georgie," she cooed.

"You should have the stars out of the sky for a girdle, and the crescent moon to stick in your hair."

She patted his hand. "And no treasury troubles on Saturday mornings, eh? Boy, I've half a scheme for keeping the tour afloat. Wish me luck!"

"What is it?"

"I think I shall risk an 'ad.'—'Exceptional opportunity for a novice!' I shall ask a hundred and fifty premium."

"Oh!" he murmured blankly. It was a descent from the stars and the moon.

"Is it—is that kind of thing good enough?"

"What do you mean?" Her voice hardened.

"I thought you had your knife into managers who give parts to novices for premiums, and keep genuine actresses out of work?"

"It's different in my case," she asserted. "I've got to get money somewhere, if the business doesn't pick up very soon. Dad hasn't got it. If a novice wants to waste her money, it may as well come to me as anybody else. I can't help her being a fool."

He said, with diffidence: "You can help taking her hundred and fifty if you know she'll be wasting it and hasn't any talent. I wouldn't do it, if I were you, Bella. It's—I know you haven't looked at it like that—but it's rather off color."

She turned to him swiftly, her face aghast. "You don't think it's honest?" she breathed. "Oh, George, *of course*, I hadn't looked at it like that! You don't think I'd do anything shady, do you? Good gracious, I'd rather the tour dried up to-morrow. I see it now, of course! It was a perfectly hateful idea. I don't know how it ever entered my head!"

She was so much distressed that he upbraided himself for speaking too plainly.

"My dear, we all have ideas that don't bear examination. Don't look so tragical. I didn't mean to hurt you."

"I know. But it was abominable of me. You must despise me for thinking of such a thing."

"Despise you?"

"Yes, you must!"

"Bella!"

"It was low, horrible. I hate myself for it. You'll always remember it. You'll say: 'She wanted to cheat somebody.' It'll come between us. I shall never be quite the same to you again!" He slipped his arm through hers, and talked to her soothingly, tenderly, jestingly, till he had induced her to recover her composure. She nestled to him, calmed, at last—reflecting the while, that, as he was going abroad, he would

never learn that she fulfilled her intention. He felt newly protective toward her in these moments; the girl had a similar feeling for him—he seemed to her a dear, foolish fellow, to be hoodwinked for his own good. Both were laughing happily when the cab stopped.

The little house was in Mayflower Road, Clapham; and in the little dining room, the former favorite, who had put on flesh since the days when he was cast for gallant lovers, lolled, in *deshabille*, on the couch, blowing clouds of tobacco smoke across a dish of sliced ham. The actress removed her hat and coat, and plucked at her hair before the mirror over the mantelpiece. She then sat down to her supper, and Woodward, having had supper already, passed the whisky to Hillier, and inquired how much money she had played to to-night.

His comments upon her information were forcible.

"The profession has gone to the dogs," he said heavily, "gone to the dogs! Look at her, *my gy-ur!*, with all her father's genius—and, so help me, she can't draw a house in a tinpot suburb! Look at *me*—out of a 'shop' for ten months; can't get anything to do! The plain truth is, there's no room for artists on the stage to-day, we aren't wanted. The public have had so many lardy-dardy society amateurs that they don't know what acting is, any more; they don't appreciate it when you give it to 'em!"

"It seems very hard luck," Hillier assented, "I can't understand it." But he understood Woodward's decline very well; everybody understood it, excepting Woodward.

"So help me, it begins to look as if I shall have to go into vaudeville! There'll be nothing left for me but to travel with a sketch, and do two shows a night. Do you hear, Bella? That's a fine finish to your father's career! Out of the running, passed by—*me*, Tom Woodward!"

Bella took some more ham.

"When I think of the old days! They used to *eat* me. George, I was wor-

for Hillier to write to her; he met her every evening at the stage door, instead. He met her on the evening of his conversation with Crosbie, and hated the loafers about the step whose presence prevented his doing more than take her hand.

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Bella took some more ham.

"When I think of the old days! They used to *eat* me. George, I was wor-

shipped. My God, shall I ever forget the first night I played *Roy Harcourt*! They rose at me! Seven calls after the third act! They *wouldn't* let me go. All those thousands of hearts, those great human British hearts throbbing for me! I'm not easily wrought upon—his fat frame was quivering with hysteria—"I'm not easily wrought upon, but when I escaped from the applause, at last, I bowed my face on my arms and wept like a gy-urll!"

Bella reached for the mustard pot. "The show went strong to-night—with the people who were there!" she remarked. "I don't think my death scene ever went better. If it had been a big house, I'd have had—"

"I held them in the hollow of my hand," continued Woodward, with intensity. "I did what I liked with them. I ought to have taken a theatre. I ought to be an actor-manager now, like Sir Herbert Tree, and Sir Charles Wyndham. I might have had a knighthood, Bella, my child, but I lived for my art, I was never a business man. If I had my time again, I'd be in management, and there'd be less talk about the degeneracy of the stage. I'd show the youngsters on the press real plays, instead of the stuff that's called 'plays' to-day. I don't know," he exclaimed, unconsciously offensive, "upon my soul, I don't know why George can't get his plays put on. They seem to me the sort of thing that's the fashion."

"That's very encouraging, Mr. Woodward," said Hillier. "I thank you for your opinion. But I'm giving authorship up, you know."

"Yes, good lad! Yes, there's nothing like business, George. And you've a great chance. *What* a chance! South Africa, diamonds, a generous uncle. Better than scribbling!"

"The Diamond King!" suggested Bella. "And he'll wear a beautiful fur coat, and a hat like *Wilfrid Denver* when we see him again. But don't make your entrance with white hair, George, or I shan't go back with you."

"It wouldn't surprise me if you don't go to him at all," said the actor, optimistic about everything but his pro-

fession. "If his uncle's as good as his word, George won't need to stay away for long."

"I don't know about that," demurred Hillier. "You saw his letter—all he says definitely, is that he can give me a start. The 'financial opportunities' that he alludes to mayn't weigh much. Crosbie, my pal, didn't strike them, when he was out there."

"We all understand what is meant. Your uncle's a rich man. And he is unmarried. Read between the lines, laddie, look ahead!"

"There's plenty of time for him to marry; he's not so many years older than I am! And I've no idea whether he's rich or not. As a matter of fact, I shouldn't say he was; as manager, he'll be getting a big salary, that's all!"

"And the investments he has made? The shares he holds? What do you suppose he has been doing with his money if he hasn't invested it? Why, in a country like that, he may find himself a millionaire any day! And poor men don't send drafts for other people's passages, laddie. Don't you fret! You're in clover."

Hillier tried to think so, but he was a dramatist by temperament, a writer born, and, lightly as he had talked of renouncing his ambition, it wasn't an easy thing to do. Moreover, Crosbie's words had sunk. There was more misgiving in his mood than he chose to acknowledge, even to himself, as he reflected that he was pledged to cast his art aside, and adventure strange pursuits, in strange surroundings, far from every one and everything that he held dear. This letter, which was to effect so great a change in his life, had reached him, via an aunt in Warwickshire, only ten days since, and reached him, too, at a moment when dramatic authorship was presenting its harshest side. Now, as the actor expatiated glibly on a subject of which he knew nothing, and his daughter concurred gayly in his deductions, the young man wondered whether he was doing well, after all—even wondered for a brief instant whether Bella comprehended his defeat as truly as Crosbie did.

For it *was* defeat, at thirty-one. As his friend had asserted, he was throwing up the sponge, admitting that he had misjudged his power, wasted his energies, been whipped. He winced. For the first time he questioned if Bella had been quite so sympathetic as she might have been, all considered; and then he called himself a cad and a coward for the thought. Words that she had spoken during the drive echoed in his mind, and tenderness for her overwhelmed him. What a fool he was to be reluctant! A stiff struggle, with a stout heart, and she would be his wife!

Of the nature of the struggle he had not an inkling, but better a potent pickaxe than futile pen. To win her he would swing the pick mightily, and sweat and labor and rejoice. To the devil with the vanity of authorship, fame might go rip, he sought but the means to marry! Emotion idealized the little, smoky, vulgar room, from which he would soon be thousands of miles away. The lover longed, and the actor prated—and Bella took some more ham.

CHAPTER III.

On the following Monday she was again playing in the provinces, and two or three days before he sailed Hillier went down to the town to say good-by to her. The last evening was, perforce, spent in London, and Crosbie, who had bowed to the inevitable, simulated a cheerful face. At the dinner hour the pair strode forth to a little Soho restaurant which had long since commended itself to their palates and their purses.

The restaurant of reminiscences was as worthy to-night as usual, but both men had often patronized it in better spirits. At this table in the corner, they had discussed many mutual interests in the past—to-night their interests lay in opposite directions; already the gossip of newspaper regions fell flat on Hillier's ears. At this table Crosbie had heard the first rough plan for "All the World Wondered." At this table they had celebrated, and celebrated munificently, Erskine's advance

payment of fifty pounds on account of royalties. Memories were busy in the friends, and, truth to tell, while they affected cheerfulness, each of them was conscious that they would have done better to dine elsewhere.

"I suppose," said Crosbie carelessly, "you'll find time to scribble a line, now and then? Don't forget all about me, hang you!"

"I'll write. Expect to hear from you, too."

"Nothing for *me* to say. Same old jog-trot that you know all about."

"Rats! If *you* don't write, I shan't. You can tell me how Fleet Street looks."

"Much you'll care to hear about Fleet Street in Bultfontein. About as lively as looking at a stranger's album; I suppose——"

"What?"

"I was going to say, I suppose this is intended to represent *sauté* of chicken, but it's a doubtful point. The cooking's going off here."

"You weren't going to say anything of the sort. Come on! What was it?"

"Being a bit of an ass, I was going to ask if you'd care for me to mail you any of the theatrical notices. Of course, you wouldn't! On second thoughts, I shouldn't mail them, if you would."

"Why?"

"Because I should be a hopeless idiot to remind you of what you mustn't think about. It's going to be difficult for you not to look back, old chap. You mustn't! If you do, you'll come a cropper between two stools. It won't serve you to have chucked writing if you hanker after it all the time."

"I know. I'm not going to hanker, Crosbie, I'm going to play the hand for all it's worth. Just as if I had never hoped for anything else. Honest Injun! Yes, I expect it *will* be difficult, at the beginning; the past always has a glamour; I shall forget the miseries, and remember the encouragement, such as it was. But I mean to live all that down. Cent per cent., or the shovel and the hoe, or whatever I'm put to, is going to be my life. Let's have another bot-

tle! What shall we do with ourselves this evening?"

"Go to a music hall."

"I'm not in the humor for a music hall. I tell you what—it's a solemn farewell, and appropriate—we'll go to a theatre!"

"There was once," said Crosbie, "a drunkard who took the pledge, and had a whisky to reward his reformation."

"I don't want any moral chestnuts. We'll go to a theatre! We'll drop into the pit, my boy, and tell each other how damn silly the stage is, and ridicule the fools who're keen on writing for it."

So they went to a theatre—as it happened, to the Diadem Theatre, in which "All the World Wondered" lay, dogs-eared, and coffee-stained, and dusty, in a cupboard, where Erskine, or an underling, had eventually stuffed it. And in the crowded pit, while the stalls filled, Hillier lived scenes of his play again, and recalled the dreams that he had dreamed for it. In the crowded pit, while the fiddles scraped, the beaten dramatist tried to fancy his own title meeting his eyes on the programme, instead, tried to fancy the curtain rising on his own play, and the rows of white-waistcoated men and bejeweled women applauding his own work.

The drama that was being performed had been adapted from the French. The motive had suffered in adaptation, but the skill of the construction held him in a vise. Erskine rose to his best in the piece, but the technique of the author engrossed Hillier more than the acting. So might *he* have been competent to conduct a scene one day—so might *he* have mastered his medium, if he had persevered. "Ain't it a lovely play?" gasped a female behind him to her husband, in an interval. So might she have gasped of *his*!

The fourth act was a trifle thin, something of a foregone conclusion. He sat wondering how it could have been bettered, discerning no way, though alive to its shortcomings—manipulating the material, in moments, with as much absorption as if it had been his own manuscript. The fashionable

women began to put on their cloaks, the white-waistcoated men stooped for their hats. The curtain fell. The orchestra lilted a "two-step," while the crowd streamed out. He stood and contemplated the emptying house with thoughtful eyes. Good-by!

"Had a good time?" asked Crosbie grimly, in the street.

"Jolly!" he answered, with a valiant lie.

A little snow was falling as they turned homeward. A little snow was falling next day when his trunk was hoisted on to a fourwheeler. Crosbie was needed at the office, to see the paper to press, and couldn't go to the station with him. They parted on the slushy pavement, outside the lodging. Despite the slush, Soho was somehow attractive this morning; it seemed to the traveler that one might be tolerably happy in Soho.

The last bag was thrust into the cab, and Crosbie forced a smile.

"By the way, I told Bella she was to let you know if she wanted anything," said Hillier.

"Right!" said the other. The men's hands gripped. "So-long, old chap!"

He telegraphed a final message to her from the docks. It was the first voyage of any importance that he had made, and the novelty of it all was good for him. It was good to feel the boat pitch in the Bay of Biscay, since he proved a fair sailor, good to feel the spray scatter in his face, good to feel that the partings were well behind, and that, with every day, and every knot, he steamed closer to the fulfillment of his aim.

The ocean began to sparkle pleasantly, the sun's rays grew genial and warmed his blood. Women lolled in white frocks under the canvas now, and men appeared in flannels and straw hats. Bluer and brighter grew the sea, gayer and hotter shone the sun. Had he really left snow in London? What was Bella doing? In every hour, how was life treating Bella? The caress of summer nights, as he paced the silvered deck, meant Bella's kisses; the love songs, carried on the summer

breeze, meant Bella's voice. Impatience began to quiver in him, he was athirst to arrive, to work, to win. The rhythmic pulsations were no longer lulling, the leisurely routine no longer charmed. His questions were eager, how soon might they expect to land?

Days dragged. The monotony was on his nerves. Then it was the general topic; on all sides, the same thing: "To land? To land?" The captain was pestered with inquiries, conversation was of concerts and raffles no more, but of "getting in." A white wall floated past the portholes in the pearliness of morning. The wall revealed itself a wharf, with white hands and brown faces, a crowd of waving colonists, and jabbering Malays. A babel of cries reached the passengers in the staterooms, a chattering throng sped from below to stare at Table Mountain across the bay. The Customs, the glare of Adderley Street. So this was Cape Town!

The railway journey afforded him a sunset for diversion, a sunset blazing and incredible. He heard that formerly the journey had occupied a week; in those days there had been no line beyond Nel's Point. He was thankful that matters had improved.

Kimberley at last! But he had sent no telegram from the Colony, and there was no one on the platform to meet him. To drive to Bultfontein, he had been informed, took about half an hour. He had learned, too, that, since he proposed to do business there, a Du Toits Pan hotel would suit him better than hotels in Kimberley. He hailed one of the vehicles that served as cabs.

The picturesque was conspicuously absent from the drive, and clouds of dust and grit blew, as if on the breath of a furnace, stinging his face and hands. The little Hottentot, undeterred, rattled him onward briskly; and, after stopping at a primitive hotel, where the baggage was deposited, the cart bounded into a winding track, between heaps of tailings. In sight of a corrugated iron shed, amid the distant clangor of machinery, the Hottentot announced that the Bultfontein Im-

perial was reached. The dramatist got down, and paid what was asked, and, in the ferocious heat, stood for an instant blinking at his destination.

The shed, blazing in the sun, proved to contain three sweltering white men, scantily clothed, who were engaged, at a long, rough table, in sorting small mounds of rubbish with scraps of slate. As he entered, one of the men appeared to discern something of value among the rubbish, and Hillier concluded that it was a diamond, though it looked like a bit of alum. Having inquired where he could find Mr. Somerset, he was told that Mr. Somerset was in the claims, and he trudged in the direction indicated.

His walk across the burning "floors" brought him to the edge of the mine, in the depths of which gangs of nude Kaffirs were digging sluggishly. Great iron tubs, whirring along runners, bore the soil to the summit, turned a mechanical somersault, and whirled down, emptied, for more. To one of the ascending tubs, a man, in his shirt sleeves, clung, a man with a lanky frame and high cheek bones.

"Hello," he said curiously. "Want anybody?"

"I want Mr. Jack Somerset."

"Here he is! Are you—what's your name?"

"George Hillier.' Yes, I'm your nephew! How d'ye do, Uncle Jack?"

Somerset put out a hearty hand. "Glad to see you. So you've got here! How d'ye like the look of it? Come along; I'm going to the sorting shed. Or would you like to go down the mine?"

"The way you came up?" asked Hillier. "I'm not keen on it, thanks. I've had no acrobatic training."

The other grinned. "You could walk down. But it'll keep! When did you get here?"

They strode back together, and Hillier took another glance at him. With two days' stubble on his cheeks and chin, gray with dust, and soaked with perspiration, he bore scant resemblance to the wealthy relative of Woodward's prognostications. His hat would have

been rejected by a tramp, and his shirt might have fluttered fitly as a scarecrow.

"Just had a find!" he said genially, pulling a larger bit of the "alum" substance from a pocket of his bedford cards.

"So that's a rough diamond, is it?" said Hillier, examining it. "I wouldn't have known."

"About a carat and a half!" He laughed. "You'll know all about it by and by. I'll take you round when I've time, and show you the gear. What have you done with your traps?"

"I left them at the Carnaroon Hotel; I was told there was no place nearer. But it isn't cheap."

"You don't want a hotel, at all. You can have the cottage on the works; I'm not using it just now; I'm sleeping at the club."

"Your cottage? It's awfully good of you. Are you quite sure I shan't be turning you out?"

"That's all right, I'm at the club," repeated Somerset. "Want to fix you up as well as we can, you know!"

"I was very glad to get your letter," said Hillier nervously. "I want to thank you. It was jolly fine of you to think of a fellow you hadn't seen since he was a kid."

"Oh!" He gave a shrug. "Nothing in that. Let's hope it'll be a paying game. We must see what we can do for you by degrees. No fortune to be made in five minutes, you know; you mustn't expect impossibilities. Times aren't what they were! *Chercha! Macho!*" he shouted to a Kaffir, who was playing a hose on an arid, glittering waste. "Do you know what he's watering that ground for?"

His nephew was going to say, "To make the flowers grow," but doubted if humor would be thought appropriate to the occasion. He said that he had no idea.

"That's the 'blue,' the diamondiferous soil. It's hard. It has got to be watered and left to lie on the floors before it can be broken up and sorted. We don't so often come across stones

in the claims—it's the sorting shed that pays the dividends."

There were many such scraps of information—many less easy to understand. Of engineering, Hillier was hopelessly ignorant, and details of the hauling gear, coupled with the appalling heat, made his head ache badly. He began to feel very awkward, very stupid, as his uncle seemed to take it for granted that he was comprehending the unintelligible. He began to wish he were his own master again, to sigh for the right to say, as he might have said to Crosbie: "I've had enough to go on with, I'm going to lie down!" It was a relief to be shown the Spartan simplicity of the "cottage," with its corrugated iron walls, and its temperature of a bakehouse. It was still more relieving to find himself in an armchair in the little club at last, taking a deep draught of lager.

"It'll all strike you as a bit strange at first," said Somerset easily, "but you'll soon learn the ropes. And anything's better than the kid glove and frock coat life at home, when a fellow's got no cash!"

"Frock coats didn't trouble me," smiled Hillier. "I wasn't so fashionable."

"You've been in low water, haven't you?"

"I've had a pretty rough time, yes. I've not been one of the lucky ones."

"I should imagine writing for a living can't amount to much, at the best. Well, you've got out of it; that's over now. The question is, what can we do for you here? You must be satisfied to begin small, you know; there's nothing much to be done right off. I'd have started you broking, once upon a time, but those days are gone—like the money we all had! I've seen some changes on the Fields, I can tell you. I was worth thirty thousand pounds, George, eight years ago—in scrip. To-day, I ain't worth one! Well, when you've felt your feet, I can shove you on a bit. You had better come on at the works at once, and as soon as I can I'll find you a better berth there—may get you a five-pound-a-week berth in a

few months. And you'll be sure of your oats from the start."

Hillier could not contrive to look exhilarated.

"What—er—what sort of thing could I do?" he inquired.

"At the start? Have to make an overseer of you. I can put you to something else when you've learned a thing or two; but, to begin with, I don't see anything for you but an overseer's place; there's no other job you could take on without experience. Anyhow, three pounds a week is better than nothing, I suppose? That's an overseer's pay. And *you* won't have any rent, at the cottage—you can spend all you make on your grub, and feed decently."

His intentions were of the best, and he had shown himself generous, and Hillier was alive to the facts; but when the newcomer smoked alone by and by—and solitude was welcome—his eyes were gloomy. Three pounds a week, with the prospect of rising to five in the course of months, meant a position little better than the one he had resigned. Indeed, considering that food and everything else were doubtless far more expensive here, it meant no improvement at all. He wondered tardily whether Somerset had understood the situation in London. Had it been assumed that he was failing to earn a bare living? He perceived too late that the sensible plan would have been for him to explain his circumstances fully before he accepted the invitation to discard them.

But it was no use dwelling on that now! All he could do was to put a good face on the disappointment and try to justify his mistake.

CHAPTER IV.

A young lady, or gentleman, will be received as pupil by an Actress-Manageress (celebrated name) in a High Class Company on tour. Small salary to begin. Exceptional opportunity for a novice of earnest intentions. Moderate premium. Only aspirants of education and refinement can be considered. Address Box L, 610, etc.

Bella inserted her advertisement a

little more than a week after Hillier sailed, and she had taken great pains in composing it. Especially had the line before the address exercised her mind. It was of small moment to her whether an aspirant possessed education and refinement, or not, and it might be indiscreet to deter anybody from applying. On the other hand, the stipulation gave to the bait an air of integrity that pleased her. The thought that most people considered themselves to be educated and refined determined her to include the verbal flourish.

Her note to Woodward, who had pooh-poohed her project, was full of confidence when she sent him a cutting from the newspaper, with the advertisement heavily marked. His comment that she "would be precious lucky if she found a greenhorn to part with even twenty pounds" failed to discourage her, and a few days later, she breakfasted joyously. She had found a letter on the table, asking for particulars.

The letter was signed "Arthur Marsden," and he wrote from Jevington Gardens, Regent's Park. She didn't know the street, but "Jevington Gardens, Regent's Park," sounded as if he was well-to-do. Fearful of losing him by asking too much, she nevertheless avoided stating the amount of the premium required. After wasting a quire of imposing theatrical stationery, she replied that it was impossible to speak definitely until she could judge of his abilities. She declared:

I love my art, and love to help those who have a gift for it. If you are really talented, I will do all I can to meet your wishes.

Hearing no more for nearly a week, she was faint with apprehension.

Then came another note, by which Mr. Marsden requested an interview, and the correspondence culminated in his proposing to call upon the following Tuesday, "when, I see, you will be nearer town than at present."

She was to be in Sweetbay, and she canceled her arrangement for lodgings there, and decided on a hotel. It was a sprat to catch a whale, but the

sprat was shockingly expensive, compared with the guinea that she was to have paid for a bedroom and parlor in the apartment house, and she trembled for the result. What if he didn't come, after all? What if he did come, but proved to be a little clerk, with ten pounds for his fortune?

The latter danger was much the more probable, and misgiving mastered her on Tuesday afternoon. She had engaged a private sitting room for his reception, and she "set the scene" as attractively as she could. A copy of *The Sweetbay Advertiser*, displaying a complimentary notice of last night's performance, lay carelessly on the table. Photographs of herself, and her father, adorned the mantelpiece. When she heard, with a heart thump, that her visitor had arrived, she sped to the bedroom, that he might have five minutes alone to read the *Advertiser's* compliments. Her toilet seemed satisfactory to her, as she surveyed herself again, but her application of the powder puff was nervous.

"Mr. Marsden?" She entered gracefully—and was staggered to find him between fifty and sixty years of age, a distinguished, delicate-looking man.

"Miss Woodward, how do you do?"

"So we have met at last!" she murmured, struggling to conceal her astonishment.

"I hope the preliminaries have not bored you?"

"Oh, not at all, I'm sure! Won't you sit down?"

They sat.

"Perhaps I had better explain at once," he said, regarding her with evident approval, "that my inquiries have been made on another's behalf. I—er—I am not contemplating my debut as *Romeo*, Miss Woodward." He smiled, and she laughed merrily at his wit.

"How amusing!"

"I am somewhat past the age." A bow precluded the compliment. "Unfortunately!"

It continued well. She was beginning to feel at ease. The waiter came in again with the tea.

"Do you take cream and sugar, Mr. Marsden?" she said.

"Thank you, yes. One lump—er—you have a very fascinating profession, Miss Woodward. At one time, I was nearly an aspirant for histrionic laurels. I have always taken a very great interest in the stage, a very great interest, from my youth. No cake, thank you. Well, then, the tiniest piece! It looks delicious. Yes, my inquiries were made on behalf of a young lady. I should much like her to meet you, if possible."

"I shall be very pleased. She has had no experience, I suppose?"

"No; I understood that you were prepared to—er—consider the raw material, so to speak?"

"Oh, quite so, quite. It's far better for her to have had no experience at all than to have picked up a bad style."

"So I should have imagined, yes. As a matter of fact, she was not anticipating any career. It is a very sad case; her mother has lately suffered severe reverses, and it has become necessary for the girl to support herself. Quite unexpectedly. The stage was really my own suggestion for her. I—er—don't want to be unduly enthusiastic, but I am a confirmed playgoer; I have been a playgoer for thirty odd years—I remember your father's first appearance in London, Miss Woodward, in a comedy of H. J. Gardiner's, at the Strand." He beamed.

"Now, is that so?" she cried, leaning forward, enthralled. "How very interesting!"

"I remember he came down a path, with a fishing rod over his shoulder, a handsome fellow he was! And I remember the notices on him, too. 'A notable acquisition to the London stage,' the *Telegraph* said next morning."

"How very interesting," she cried again, radiantly, "just fancy your remembering all that! How perfectly lovely of you! What a pity he isn't here; he would have so enjoyed meeting you!" She was wondering to what amount he was interested in the young lady.

"Yes, I've been a playgoer all my life. I was going to say I am convinced that she has really remarkable talent. Remarkable talent! But you will understand that, in the circumstances, the main thing is that she should secure a salary, from some source or other, as soon as possible. The lady is a connection of mine, and if it is in my power to put her in the way to make a living, I am quite willing to do it, but—I'll be open with you—I have stronger claims upon me, and my financial assistance can be only slight. Now, as to the question of premium, what sum are you thinking of, Miss Woodward, and what salary would you pay?"

The moment had come; all of a sudden a hundred and fifty pounds sounded colossal to her; she wished she were more accustomed to dealing with such figures.

"The premium is a hundred and fifty," she murmured. "And, at the start, while she was learning her business, I would pay—well, ten shillings a week would be very fair, indeed, I think?"

His smile numbed her. "Quite impracticable," he said genially, "quite!"

"You see——"

"For one thing, the premium is far more than I should be justified in paying."

"A hundred and fifty?" she exclaimed, awed by it less, now that she had once named it. "Why, in most first-class companies they would want three times as much! And with me, she'd have a round of parts, instead of being drilled in one; she'd have thorough training."

"I don't undervalue the advantages," he returned good-humoredly, "but my interest is not so—it goes beyond my intentions. The most that I was prepared to find was a hundred. I don't know that I ought to do so much as that. And I freely confess that, if I did, it would have to end my services in the matter. Now, the salary you mention wouldn't suffice to keep her. If I supplied a hundred pounds, it would be solely with the object of

placing her in a position to maintain herself without any further help from me."

"Oh!" she faltered. "Yes, I see. Well, supposing we said fifteen shillings a week? You know, I could get an experienced woman for very little more than that. Of course, I am accepting your opinion of her capabilities, I'm taking it for granted that she has talent; if I didn't believe she was clever, I couldn't consider her at all; I couldn't put a girl into my company if she hadn't the makings of an actress in her."

"I am afraid—er—that it wouldn't meet the case," he demurred, with a lingering smile. But he was obviously enjoying the interview, to be talking business with a lady in the theatrical profession was clearly a piquant novelty to him. "I shall have to turn the matter over in my mind. Now, a very important point! For how long would the engagement last?"

"That," she said, "would naturally depend on her progress. I'll be quite straightforward with you. If she is clever, it would last, well——" Her gesture embraced decades. "My idea is to tour permanently. I don't want to go to town, I don't 'feel' modern parts, I don't want to accept engagements in the West End, to play in drawing-room pieces. My idea is to make this company an institution. On this tour, we're doing 'The Merchant of Venice,' and 'As You Like It,' and 'Romeo and Juliet,' but by degrees I want to include all the principal Shakesporean plays. I must have range; I couldn't content myself with a small repertoire! It wouldn't suit me to run the tours on strictly commercial lines, and to put up only the pieces that drew best; I rather hope to educate the provinces in the next few years—does it sound frightfully idealistic of me? I want to reveal a good deal more of Shakespeare to them than they know at present. For a girl who's really ambitious and keen on working, the opportunity with me would be unique. You should come to see us one night; see what you think of us!"

"I should be delighted," said Mr. Marsden.

"Why not come this evening? Can't I tempt you?"

"This evening? I meant to go back by the six-thirty. I should have brought a bag if I had thought of staying overnight."

"Oh, not many of the people come in evening dress here. Besides, you can have a box," she urged. "Let me give you another cup of tea?"

"No more, thank you, no. Really, it sounds very attractive. I—er—what is to-night's programme?"

"As You Like It.' Now, do come! You'll find this hotel very comfortable—and you can tell me what you think of my *Rosalind*. Come up here and have supper with me after the show. Now, that's arranged!"

"Oh, no, no, I protest," laughed Mr. Marsden; "if I stay, it must be on the condition that you are my guest at supper. And I must warn you that you'll find me rather a—rather a captious critic; I am something of a Shakesperian student, myself. Do I terrify you?"

"N-o," she said, "you interest me; I'd like to have your criticism; one may learn so much, after all one's practical experience, from the remarks of a cultured man."

"Your experience has not extended over many years, Miss Woodward!"

"More than I like to count," she pouted. "I was in the profession when I was fourteen. And, oh, how we had to work in those days! Those were the days when actresses were made. No coming down late for rehearsal, then, and playing one's self night after night for six months. Study, study, study; I lived in the theatre. How I used to cry sometimes, poor little mite! But it did me good; I shouldn't be as good an actress now without it."

She favored him with pet reminiscences, pathetic and laughable in turn. She listened to his somewhat tedious views upon the functions of the stage with eager eyes. He took leave of her on capital terms with himself, foreseeing a most agreeable evening; and,

when the door closed, the lady indulged in a caper of content.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Arthur Marsden was a widower, with no children, and artistic leanings. He had remained outside artistic circles, not because he lacked the income to surround himself with actors, and authors, and musicians, but because he lacked the energy to desert his groove and make their acquaintance. In his selfish, indolent life, nothing so upheaving had happened for many years as a recent visit from the girl to whom he had referred vaguely as a "connection."

In reality, she was his niece, and she had burst in upon him at luncheon, to petition for introductions to people who wanted "a secretary, or a governess, or something." Sufficient remained to his sister-in-law from the wreck to support both her and her daughter in discomfort.

"Why not live together quietly in the country?" he had pleaded. "Why this melodramatic desire to work? Don't be ridiculous; I don't know any one who wants a secretary." Indeed, rather than face the difficulties of procuring employment for her, he would have mollified some of the asperities of the discomfort.

When, driven into a corner, he hinted as much, however, it appeared that Miss Peggy Marsden was quite unwilling to be a pensioner on his bounty. To work, she said steadily, was her fixed intention. If he declined to further her aim, "it would end by her becoming a waitress in a tea shop, that was all!"

She shared his luncheon with a healthy appetite, and dizzied him by the vigor of her insistence. She was a very pretty girl, and the only one of his family for whom he entertained any affection; but when she averred that it was his duty to bestir himself, he came near to disliking her.

Some years earlier, she had been afflicted with an access of stage fever—it was, perhaps, what had first endeared

her to him—and the theatre, as a career for her, occurred to him presently rather in the manner of an inspiration. If it was inevitable that the burden of correspondence and interviews should be thrust upon him, let the correspondence and interviews be personally interesting. He did not, of course, say this to himself in so many words, but the thought underlay his suggestion; it prompted him to waive aside her argument that a dramatic opening would take too long to obtain; and it enabled him, in the course of the next few weeks, to concern himself with the question of her future with something like zest.

The zest was in no wise diminished by an evening at the Theatre Royal, Sweetbay, where he savored a feeling of theatrical importance, as he sat in the box and applauded, with an air of profound discrimination. It was not diminished by the novel experience of supping tête-à-tête with an actress when the performance was over. In fact, he found Miss Bella Woodward so attractive that no elderly gentleman had ever contemplated assisting his niece with more sincere pleasure. When he traveled back to London next day, Mr. Marsden had practically pledged himself to provide the premium of a hundred and fifty pounds, on the understanding that the salary was to be a pound a week.

Bella was enraptured. Though a pound a week was certainly too much, so was a hundred and fifty pounds, and she knew it. She awaited the next communication, trembling, and when she had had an interview with the aspirant, and the agreement was signed, and the check paid, theatrical management, for a brief spell, looked to her a bed of roses.

Her elation continued until a long letter apprised her that George had arrived in Bultfontein. Though he had done his utmost to couch the report in cheerful terms, the news that he had been compelled to give appalled her. Optimistic embellishments could not alter the fact that the journey had proved an abject failure.

She was stricken. She hated the unknown Somerset furiously for the false hopes that she had nursed, regretted vehemently that she had let George sail. She was in love with him as deeply as she was capable of loving; had missed him; she had condemned herself to a good many hours of sentimental loneliness for nothing, and, in a passionate pity for her plight, she buried her face in the sofa cushion. She sobbed, and bit her handkerchief hysterically, questioning if any girl had been more cruelly served.

There was nothing to take her to the theatre that morning, and, in any case, she could not have endured a rehearsal. She lay huddled on the sofa, too despairing even to unfold the local *Gazette*, although she surmised that it contained a notice of her *Portia*. A knock at the door irritated her, and the slovenly landlady put in a tousled head to say that "one of the hactresses, Miss Marsden, was asking to see her for a minute." She replied testily that she had a violent headache, and could see no one. Why couldn't she be left alone?

After a few moments the woman came back. Miss Marsden had left a message; her uncle was expected, and had telegraphed that he hoped Miss Woodward would lunch with them at the Royal Hotel at half-past one.

She would do nothing of the sort, she raged. A nap would have calmed her; but her disappointment was too acute to permit her to sleep. Again she read passages of the letter:

Don't take the blow too badly, dearest, there may be very much better news before long.

How? What justified him in saying so?

There's a good time coming, little girl.

It was a long while making the trip! What footing flam her father had talked about the prospect, it was really all his fault that she felt so awful now! She beat her clinched hands on her limbs, and promised herself to announce the truth as crushingly as possible when she wrote to him. Let him tumble from illusion with a thud, too!

She would have liked a brandy and soda. Some champagne would be better still. If she accepted the invitation, she'd probably get some! After all, a change was what she needed; to lie here all day and stare at the ghastly oleographs on the mustard walls would drive her mad! There was plenty of time for her to wave her hair and dress.

"For nobody but you!" she laughed, taking her host's eager hand. "I was awake the whole night long. Oh, my dear child, I was so sorry I couldn't see you when you called. I was simply raving with neuralgia. This is a delightful surprise, Mr. Marsden! Have you come down to see if she's a great actress yet?"

"I hope not!" said Peggy Marsden. She had made her debut as an "extra lady," to accustom her to the glare of the footlights, and the sea of faces, for even a scanty audience may present a sea of faces to the scared gaze of a novice; and after a couple of weeks she had been promoted to a few lines. Truth to tell, the "profession" was not proving very attractive to her, though she had felt that it would be base ingratitude of her to say so. "I hope not," she repeated, "I hope he isn't going in front at all!"

"In front, you notice!" said Bella archly. "We've taught her some of the slang, at any rate. Why, of course, your uncle's going in front, young woman. And, you know, Mr. Marsden, you have to come to-morrow; for you'll see, 'As You Like It' again to-night—I can't have you thinking we never play anything else!"

"I'm convinced you could never play anything as I *didn't* like it," said the gentleman ponderously.

"Oh! How neat!" The witticism captivated her. Peggy observed that her manageress was far more gleeful at luncheon than at the theatre. Very soon the convalescent was chattering gayly. She was being admired; she was queening it in an hotel, which, compared with her lodgings, was luxurious, and her misery and George had both faded from her mind.

Mr. Marsden was prevailed upon to remain to see the performance on the following evening. Before he left it was arranged that during the next week but one, she and Peggy should lunch with him in Jevington Gardens. The company would be in a London suburb, and he "trusted to have the pleasure of seeing Miss Woodward more than once."

The aspect of his house, its air of sober opulence startled Bella. Though she had understood him to be well off, she had not pictured him so rich as this. She wondered if the wealthy widower might be expected to render further financial aid. She resolved to ingratiate herself with his niece. In reverie, she questioned how much his attentions meant.

So did her father, who had been "immensely interested to hear that you remembered him at the Strand, Mr. Marsden, and was so eager to meet you!" Tom Woodward lunched there, too—with a guard on his vocabulary, and a warm appreciation of the wine—and he remarked to *Portia* that night while she sat at the supper table, that "if she weren't a fool, she'd have something better than fat ham for supper before long!"

Because she had been guilty of a similar thought herself, because she was in love with George Hillier, and resenting that the house with the elegant furniture and the spacious lawn wasn't his, her temper blazed.

"I don't know what you mean," she said heatedly. "None of that, please!"

"Better than the profession. Take it from me!"

"You seem to forget I'm engaged, don't you? Ever hear of George? Perhaps you'll manage to remember him, if you try."

"I've nothing against George, my gy-ur!" returned the actor. "My God, I'm not the man to desert a pal because he's out of luck. Nobody could ever say that of Tom Woodward! But it's no use spoofing yourself—George has struck a frost. I don't see George coming home at all. I don't see a shadow of a chance for him."

"You advised him to go out there!" she flashed.

"Advised? What was he doing here? It was 'Hobson's choice.' If George had been able to make his way in London, I'd have said: 'Stay where you are, my lad!' George couldn't get on, he hadn't the—I don't know, George is lacking in something, he hasn't the grit, he was no use here, and he seems to be no use there. He's a good chap, but—the Colonies are full of Georges, there's no success for 'em anywhere! Advise? I'm not the man to go back on anything I've said, but were the facts put before me properly? I was misled! Was I told this Somerset's real position? I don't say George deceived us intentionally, but he was too keen on the thing, he took too much for granted, he has got no judgment." His grievances against the unfortunate mounted rapidly. "I must say I think George was a good deal to blame! I gave him credit, for better sense. And better feeling, that's another thing! When he arrived and found out his mistake, he should have written in a different way—he should have told you he had nothing to expect and release you from the engagement."

"He knew very well I didn't want to be released," she put in. But her voice was no longer indignant, it was only sullen.

"That's what he should have done, by rights—released you from the rotten engagement. That would have been the honorable course to take. Is it honorable to hold a gy-ur! to an impulsive promise all her life, when he knows he has nothing to look forward to? Is it honorable to stand between her and—and Money? I call it a dirty trick. So I do, a dirty, caddish trick! I've done with George!"

She had risen, and stood staring at the fire now—silent. Later she marvelled that she had permitted his abuse of her lover to pass so meanly, but her temper had subsided, at the moment she felt too dreary to challenge and defend. Her thoughts were again in Jevington Gardens, and she was wondering if Mr. Marsden kept a carriage.

CHAPTER VI.

"I should imagine writing for a living can't amount to much, at the best," Jack Somerset had said when Hillier arrived, and he often said the same thing afterward. It was the irony of the position that, while the artist mourned in every hour the life he had relinquished, he was expected to congratulate himself on the change.

He resented having to grin while he bore it, he chafed at the pointless: "Well, you're out of all that now!" A dozen times he was near to exclaiming: "Worse luck!" He might have cried: "Look here, I was every bit as well off as this in London; I want to kick myself, don't ask me to crow!" But it would have sounded thankless, and, moreover, it could serve no purpose, for he had neither the means to return, nor the wish to borrow them.

So only Crosbie heard his regrets; only in an occasional letter to Crosbie did he utter what he felt. To Bella he couldn't utter it—her disappointment must be bitter enough, poor girl, without his repining. To her he must affect hopefulness. He used to write to her, on mail nights, in the shanty that was called a "cottage," fronting the tailings heap; and afterward, with a pipe between his teeth, and longing in his heart, stand thinking of her on the little "stoop" in the darkness, where the crooning of the Kaffirs round their mealie pots was the only sound. At sunup, he would take his way among them to the glaring Floors, and overlook their labors, lest diamonds were stolen, until the whistles screamed again. At sundown he was free to drop, dog-tired, upon his bed before he ate.

So the weeks passed, and the months.

"What about that 'better berth'?" he inquired at last. "When is it likely to turn up?"

"Well, I can't manufacture one for you, you know," said Somerset; "you must make the best of things till there's an opening."

It was on a Sunday, and Hillier had had tiffin with him in the club. The mail was just in, and they were sit-

ting by the window of the billiard room, waiting for some one to come back from the post office with the letters.

"Well, vaguely, when is an opening likely to occur?"

Somerset shrugged his shoulders. "How the deuce do I know that? What's your hurry, anyhow? You've got all you want, haven't you?"

"Got all I want?"

"Well, all you can expect yet awhile? You've plenty to eat and drink, and a decent crib to sleep in. What of it when you do get a rise of a pound or two a week? You can't eat any more!"

"I could save the pound or two a week!"

"And when you've saved them? What you want to do is to keep your eyes and ears open; saving a pound or two a week isn't going to advance you. Men don't make money in a place like this by saving a pound or two a week." His tone was intolerant, the tone in which he might have addressed a boy. Hillier's temper rose.

"It may enable them to get out of the place, though!" he answered.

"Oh!" His eyebrows climbed. He lit a cigarette meditatively. "So that's it, is it? Don't like it?"

"We can put it that way if you want to. It doesn't express everything. It isn't the right way."

"Look here," said the other, more amicably, "make up your mind to stick it out. Take my tip. Of course, I know how it strikes a fellow when he first comes from home, but you can get used to it if you try—and you'll be glad. If you turn tail, you'll be sorry; you'll come back when you're ten years older and regret the chances you've missed. It's always like that; there are men on the Fields to-day, without two sixpences to knock together, who'd have been worth a fortune if they hadn't made the mistake that you want to make. What could you do if you did clear out?"

"I was no worse off in London than I am in Bultfontein; I was making as much at journalism as I am by over-seering.

"Is that so?"

"Yes, that's so. You didn't know it, I think?"

"No, I didn't know it. Still, you're here now. What is there to go back for if you were only earning the same money?"

"Well, for one thing, I very much preferred the work. And, for another, I might have struck oil with a play sooner or later."

"Oh, you wrote plays?" said Somerset, grinning. "Well, they didn't lead to much, eh? I don't suppose there's anything substantial to be made by writing plays."

"Don't you? There's a very great deal to be made by writing plays, if one gets a big success."

"If! How long were you at the game?"

"Playwriting? About nine years."

Hillier owned reluctantly.

"Nine years? And you were 'no worse off' than you are here, where you've just arrived? Put your back into it on the Fields for nine years before you grumble! I bet you'll have more to show for it than for your scribbling in London." An idea occurred to him. "You aren't such a mug as to be engaged, I hope?"

"I am engaged," said Hillier. "I don't call myself a 'mug' for it."

"Ah!"

"What of it?"

"What of it? Simply, it's a pity you didn't let me know before you came—I'd have recommended you to stay where you were. A fellow whose head is running on a girl in England all day is not likely to be much use to anybody in the Cape. He's off-color from the start; he's sick to get away from the moment he lands. Of course, you want to cut it! Now I know why. And you might as well pack your traps to-night for any good you're going to do—if I had the passage money to spare, I'd lend it to you. I haven't, though; I'm afraid you'll have to save it up, as you suggest. Not that it's easy to see how you're going to be worth a rise, you know, while your interest is all somewhere else."

"You've no right to say that!" rejoined Hillier hotly. "I came here keen, and I *have* put my back into it. It's not my fault if any half-witted loafer could do the work just as well. Find me something that gives me a show. Give me an opportunity, and you'll see whether my 'interest is all somewhere else.' What you say is wrong right away through; it was only the fact of my wanting to marry that brought me out; if I had *not* been engaged, I should never have come."

Somerset's irritation had evaporated. His attempt to play providence to his relative had failed, but the mistake was of too little importance to excite him. His chief regret was that he couldn't afford to ship the lover home and be done with the matter.

"Simmer down," he said placidly, "there's nothing to cut up rough about. You're of an age to know what you want—if you want to go back, you'll go back. What about the girl's people, were they keen on your coming here?"

"Her father thought it the best thing I could do. Of course, he didn't know much about it, he thought——"

"Thought there was a managership waiting for you on the platform, I suppose? Has he got any money?"

"No. She's on the stage; they aren't well off."

"On the stage? Really! Well, when you wrote that you were only getting three quid a week as an overseer, it must have been rather a startler to them, wasn't it?"

"They were disappointed, of course, but she was content to wait till things improved—I explained to her that it wasn't going to be a screw like that forever. I thought there was going to be more prospect. I thought I might have gone home with two or three hundred pounds, somehow, and—well, two or three hundred pounds cash, and a salary from a paper when I got there, might have meant marriage on the cheap."

Somerset didn't speak for a few seconds. He watched the form of his cigarette smoke cynically.

"And now?" he inquired. "Do you still imagine she's going to wait?"

"What?"

"Now that the trip is a fizzle?"

"If I didn't know it would be sheer humbug," said Hillier in a sharp voice, "I should have offered to release her long ago. She happens to care for me, you see, eccentric as you may think it!"

"My dear chap—Oh, well, it's waste of breath, talking!"

"Go on, say it out! You think I'm behaving unfairly to her?"

"No, it hadn't crossed my mind. If you want to know, I think you're behaving unfairly to yourself. The engagement can't arrive at anything, and it's crippling you in the meantime. Before you're in any position to marry, even 'on the cheap,' it's bound to be broken off. If *you* don't knock it on the head, *she* will!"

"I'll ask you not to speak like that," said Hillier curtly. "It's very foolish of you, too, for you don't know her."

"I know women—a bit better than you do, I guess."

"Women on the Diamond Fields!"

"Women on the Diamond Fields are much the same as they are in Hyde Park; their clothes are different, that's all. No woman is going to spend her life waiting for a fellow without a cent, especially an actress."

"Ah," said Hillier, "I thought the 'actress' would upset you! Well, the actress I'm going to marry has just as many virtues as if she were a nursery governess, or any other kind of young woman that you imagine admirable. The virtue of constancy included!"

"Like a bet?" asked Somerset jocularly, by way of response."

"I don't bet about her."

"I'll lay you ten to one that the engagement comes to nothing."

"No, thanks. Here's the mail! I'm going to get my letters."

He strode into the bar, and Somerset, who was less impatient for letters, remained a short time. When he followed, Hillier's correspondence had been read. His face was colorless, the face of a man stunned.

"Hello?" exclaimed Somerset. His

clutch of the arm wasn't without sympathy. "Here, you look as if you want a liquor! Anything wrong?"

"It's lucky for me I didn't bet!" said Hillier, trying to laugh.

CHAPTER VII.

If she had done it honestly, he thought he could have borne it better; if she had said, "I'm tired of the waiting," he could have forgiven her, owned that she had the right to say it, have taken the blow without resentment. But she had written quite differently from that. Unwisely, she had pretended that his position was not influencing her. She had been "mistaken in her feelings; for some time she had been conscious—et cetera. Lately she had met some one else whom she realized that she truly loved." It was a foolish, shallow, lying letter. He tore it into bits and scattered them on the tailings heap. But the letter had been reread so often that he knew it by heart.

And he couldn't scatter his memories. They clung. Between him and Somerset the subject had not been mentioned again since that afternoon, but daily, hourly, continuously, as he sweltered in the sun, the man looked back and thought of her. Pacing the stoep at night, while the niggers crooned, and the dogs howled, he thought of her. He thought of little else. It interested him no longer to question when higher wages would be attainable. He no longer sought to return to England and rely on his brains for a livelihood; he felt that it would be beyond him to cudgel them to any purpose. The fool's job that he had derided was all that he was fit for! Weak? He had loved her. Why, he had idealized her. Oh, he did not fail to tell himself that she wasn't worth the suffering, but he suffered no less for that.

It was by slow degrees that the artist woke in him again, by slow degrees that he came to curse his exile furiously. For her he had condemned himself to this dog's life; for a girl to whom he was nothing now. And here

he was to eat his heart out, year after year, while she laughed in another man's arms? By heaven, he would not! The blunder should end, he would escape from it, somehow; he would get back to London, even if he had to travel steerage, and live on one meal a day in the meantime. He swore it.

He swore it, and stinted himself doggedly. But after a month of semi-starvation, his savings were infinitesimal, compared with the sum he required. When he had been denying himself necessities for four months, the plan looked almost hopeless. He eliminated meat from his programme altogether now, and dined on ship's biscuits.

Fortunately, he was promoted, a few weeks later, to the position of "store-keeper" on the Works, and, because one cannot subsist on ship's biscuits, and lukewarm water with impunity, he decided to revert to meat in small quantities. But even so, the increased pay made a substantial difference to his little hoard; the savings mounted, the savings grew bulky. He admired them like a miser. When he could exchange five sovereigns for a note, it was a red-letter day to him. If the cheapest drink had not cost a shilling here, he would have slaked his thirst with something better than lukewarm water on those eventful, those momentous days.

His obsessing fear was that he might be robbed, but that did not happen. What did befall him was that he fell ill with a touch of camp fever, and was lucky to be on his feet again at no greater expense than a doctor's bill for fifteen pounds. It was a crushing setback. It threw all his expectations out of gear. It meant that his effort must be prolonged appallingly.

But the effort ended at last. There came a day when he was free. A year had passed since that Sunday when he read Bella's letter.

"I'm going home!" he announced.

"Well," said Somerset, "I'm afraid things haven't panned out very brilliantly for you; perhaps you might do worse; I don't seem to see you making your pile on the Fields. Going to write plays again?"

The ex-storekeeper nodded. "If I peg away long enough, I may get a success one day."

"I hope you will. Come and have a liquor! How soon do you sail?"

How soon did he sail? He was sailing by the first boat! In his impatience to escape, to blot the whole mistaken episode from his life, he would have refused to wait a week, even for the advantage of a saloon ticket. He sailed among the unwashed and the unspeakable, pent among odious sights and smells; but, loathsome as the journey proved, there was not a single hour in which he would have discarded the horrors of the steerage deck for the Floors of the Bultfontein Imperial.

Yes, it seemed to him ten years since he had read that letter. But he had not forgotten her. Staring at the expanse of sea, he remembered his thoughts of her on the outward passage. How different from his thoughts now! Whom had she married? He wondered if he would ever chance to meet her. With his mouth set hard, he hoped so. He cared nothing for her—she should realize how utterly indifferent he was! Was it true that he cared nothing? He told himself insistently that it was true. And, anyhow, whether it was true, or not, it would mortify her to think that he recalled her only as a folly. Yes, he would like to meet her, one day—when he had a decent coat on and the world was wagging fairly with him. He would astonish her by his geniality, accept her excuses with a laugh, and tell her it had "all been for the best." If he knew anything of Bella, that would stab deeper than the most passionate of reproaches.

How abominably close the fetid crowd was packed; lucky if he didn't contract another fever! The irony of fate that, now he could have enough to eat again, the sight of his fellow passengers at the table took his appetite away. What were they all going to do in England, these nondescripts, what were their vocations, their hopes, their aims? Were they all returning failures, like himself? Would they—the unquenchable egotism of an author—

would they one day wait at pit and gallery doors to see a play by George Hillier?

His thoughts reverted to "All the World Wondered." Erskine's option on it had expired long ago—there might be a chance for it elsewhere by this time, new managements might have arisen. He would write to the Diadem, or call there, without delay, and recover the manuscript.

How was Crosbie faring? He hadn't written for months. Was he still in Soho? What a blank arrival if Crosbie had gone away—almost like arriving in a strange city! He was counting on Crosbie, not for aid, but for welcome. He wanted to smoke a pipe opposite Crosbie and feel at home. Should he telegraph from the docks? Sixpences weren't to be squandered in the circumstances. Besides, the message wouldn't be much use; if Crosbie had sought pastures new, he wouldn't get it soon enough—and if he were still there, Soho would display him.

Thank God! His feet were on London mud at last, the rain of a London June blew in his face. A cab was an inevitable luxury; he jingled the remaining coins in his trouser pocket and laughed. Like the millionaires, who seem never to have started life with more than a shilling, he was coming to conquer London with a slender purse. The cab rumbled presently into a thoroughfare that he knew, the city that was familiar to him revealed itself. He laughed again. His pen no longer looked impotent, he would write an article on the sensations of a Colonist coming home.

Soho, by all that was lovable! The journey was accomplished. He leaped out, and the rain sprinkled him with caresses. Though he couldn't spare it, a tip to a London cabby! The bell pealed, and the lodging-house keeper's drudge shuffled to the door.

"Lor, why it's Mr. 'Illier!" she exclaimed. He could have kissed her dirty face.

"Is Mr. Crosbie here still?"

"Yus, 'e's hupstairs," she said, and he went up the stairs three at a time.

"Crosbie! Hallo, hallo!"

"George, by Jupiter!"

"How are you, old chap?"

"Great Scot! Aren't you sunburnt? Let's have a look at you. So you've come back?"

"Come back!" They were still shaking hands. "Wish I had never gone—you were quite right. Well, you look just the same. God! It's good to see you! How is it with you, sonny?"

"Same old rut. Better than Bultfontein though, what?"

"You bet! Oh, what a time! Can I have my old room, do you know? My extensive baggage is blocking the palatial hall. Ain't I shabby, old chap; don't I cry aloud to be patched and darned? I shall be ashamed to send my underwear to a respectable cockney wash!"

"Have a drink!"

"If you press me!"

"Pipe?"

"Fork out the 'baccy. Here's to you! This is the fatted calf and no half measures. 'Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.' Produce the householder and get her to fix me up."

The "householder" was forthcoming. The desired room was vacant. The men smiled at each other anew, and occupied four chairs. In the street, an organ reeled out the latest ditty of the music halls.

"Curse the row!" said Crosbie. "That's the seventh to-day."

"Ingrate," said Hillier, "it's divine! There were no London organ grinders on the Floors at Bultfontein. Heaven must sound very much like that, Crosbie, when you first get in. Am I interrupting anything important? Is it a press day? Because if you've any work to do, you know, you can't do it. You've got to smoke and listen, and— This is very peaceful, I love that organ."

"Idiot!"

"We'll go out, by and by, and loaf round Soho again. I shall 'hear my own mountain goats bleating aloft, and know the sweet strain that the corn reapers sung'! Talking of strains, the exchequer is tight; I wonder if I can

get a job on the *Northern Dispatch* again? Who's doing the 'causeries' now?"

"I don't know. Don't worry—you'll get something soon enough. I can lend you a fiver to go on with."

"Angel boy! But I bar that. By the sweat of my brow, and the skin of my teeth, I've reached my native land, and now my native land has got to keep me. I'll go into every newspaper office in Fleet Street to-morrow, if need be! I'll take a guinea a column, if I can't get any more. I'm to be had cheap—pro tem. I tell you, I mean to work like billy oh! I mean to make up for lost time. I want to get 'All the World Wondered' back from Erskine and bring it off somewhere else right away. I think I'll go there this evening and try to see him; it'd be better than waiting for him to answer a letter. What's doing? Is there anybody new with a theatre?"

Crosbie imparted the latest theatrical intelligence, or as much of it as occurred to him. He asked questions about the experiences at the Cape. He diverged into gossip anent the doings of journalists. An hour had passed. A pause came. They smoked nervously, each conscious of what the other was thinking. At last, knocking the ashes from his pipe with unnecessary attention, Hillier murmured:

"I suppose you never hear anything of—er—Miss Woodward?"

"Not much," said Crosbie gruffly.

"She's married, of course."

"Whom did she marry? Do you know?"

"A man called 'Marsden.' Money, I hear."

"So I assumed. Well, it's a handy thing to have in the house. Who is he?"

"A gentleman of leisure, I believe—a widower."

"A widower, eh? Not in his first youth?"

"So I'm told; I understand the lady married a man old enough to be her father." He gazed ostentatiously at the stove ornament. "They live in Regent's Park. Keep a carriage. She

has chucked the stage, and does herself well. I was at a theatre the other night and saw her—in a box, and diamonds."

"Who cares?" said Hillier, looking at the stove ornament, too. "It's a rum world, Crosbie."

"Because a girl prefers a rich man to a poor one? Rum world if she didn't!"

"It's rum to think that girl and I were going to spend our lives together. D'ye remember the idea when I went away—I was coming back to marry her? Oh, yes; it's a rum world; I've come back, and didn't even know what her name was till you told me. Not that I've any sentiment about the matter; that's all dead. I don't care a jot."

"Why should you?" grunted Crosbie. "It looks as if it had stopped raining, for a change. What do you say to our going out for something to eat? And then I'll walk round to the Diadem with you if you want to try to see Erskine."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Diadem Theatre, as they approached it, looked vastly imposing, with its flood of light pouring on the pavement, and its glimpse of elegance beyond glass doors. Even the commissionaire was exalted, he wore his resplendent uniform like one who nightly ministered to rank and fashion. Upon the two shabby scribes stopping to view the photographs that were displayed at the entrance, he cast an intolerant eye.

"Did I ever aspire to write for such a palace of art?" said Hillier. "Look at the pretty pictures, Crosbie—Erskine holding a lamp. Erskine apostrophizing the heavens. Erskine the centre of an astonished group. 'The One Hundred and Fiftieth Performance'! Shall I ever run to a hundred and fifty performances? Come on to the stage door and let's try our luck!"

The stage door presented the usual aspect of stage doors. An official of discouraging demeanor sat on guard behind a little window; a young woman, presumably an actress, stood wait-

ing—in an attitude of depression, and a strong draught—a scene shifter or two slouched, and vanished, apparently without purpose.

"I want to see Mr. Erskine, please," said Hillier.

"Have you got an appointment?"

"No, but—"

"Mr. Erskine can't see anybody to-night," affirmed the official, with decision.

"My name is Hillier," said the obscure playwright firmly, "please send it in."

Even stage doorkeepers may occasionally be bluffed. The name was, after all, communicated through a speaking tube.

"Now, if the gentleman's in a bad temper, you'll look small in a minute," murmured Crosbie.

But the crisis was delayed.

"Mr. Erskine's on the stage; they'll tell him when he comes off," they heard.

"A respite, my boy! One can hardly grudge the dramatists their fees when they 'get there,' eh? They have to be snubbed on a deuce of a lot of doorsteps first. Don't go away, if his Managerial Consequence does consent to see me, I shan't be with him more than a moment."

They stood shivering just inside the open door, opposite a printed announcement that no smoking was allowed behind the scenes. More employees drifted to and fro. The dejected actress received a message of dismissal, and went out into the rain.

"Mr. Hillier, sir!" The voice was respectful; the eyes of the two writers met humorously. "Will you step downstairs, please?"

"Bounce did it!" remarked Crosbie, sotto voce. "Don't be long!"

"I shan't get the chance," said Hillier, with a wry smile, and stumbled after Erskine's dresser to his room.

Among the paraphernalia of costumes and make-up, Erskine lolled in an armchair, smoking a cigarette, with a fine disregard of his own prohibitions. At Hillier's entrance he rose and extended a cordial hand.

"Mr. Hillier, you're just the man I

wanted to see!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad you've dropped in."

Astonishment held Hillier dumb.

"Sit down." He passed the cigarettes. "I was going to write to you, about 'All the World Wondered.' I'm not sanguine about it. There's good stuff in it, of course; it's—it's strong, in a way, but I'm not sure how the public would take it; I'm not sure that you've hit on an attractive theme." He frowned deeply and assumed an air of intense mental effort. "A play to-day, Hillier—to-day, more than ever—is a very difficult proposition."

"Yes. I remember. You said something of the sort the last time I saw you." Was it merely to repeat it that he had been going to write? Why the cordiality? Why the cigarette? Surely there was good news in the air? "That was before the option terminated."

"The option, yes. Yes, I didn't see my way to do the piece. But this thing is coming off, the business has dropped all of a sudden, and Bannister's piece that I meant to do next, isn't ready yet. I must put on something in the meanwhile. I want something immediately." He paused. The pause lasted for seconds. The dramatist tried to speak, but his throat had contracted, and his heart was bumping.

"You've nothing in view for 'All the World Wondered,' I suppose?" said Erskine thoughtfully.

"No. I've been abroad. I called to—"

"Now!" He pressed his palm to his forehead, to assist the gigantic operations of his brain. "Now, if I tried 'All the World Wondered'?"

The dressing room swayed. "If you tried it?"

"If I tried it, you wouldn't want an elaborate production? I tell you, frankly, I should only look on the piece as a stop-gap. I couldn't go to any great expense in producing it."

"If it were a success," asked Hillier thickly, "would you cut the run short as soon as Bannister was ready?"

"Oh, no; certainly not. I'd run it as long as I could. But my faith in

it is not strong enough to justify a lavish mise-en-scène, you understand."

"I shouldn't expect it. If—if you put it on adequately—"

"Adequately, yes, of course. Quite so, quite so." Again he pondered. It seemed to the dramatist that the pauses were shortening his life. "Well, I'll risk it! Our contract stands, I'll do your play next." He was all at once brisk, swift, Napoleonic. "We'll start rehearsals next week. You had better come and see me again to-morrow. Come in the morning. Will twelve o'clock suit you? Now, I must turn you out. If you've any suggestions to make about the cast, let me have them to-morrow. I want to get MacFarlane for the cabinet minister, and Pendleton for Dick; Miss Vernon plays Margaret. That's settled, then. Twelve o'clock. Good-by."

"Got your manuscript?" inquired Crosbie at the top of the steps.

Hillier grabbed his arm hysterically and pulled him out into the street.

CHAPTER IX.

So, "nothing being certain but the unforeseen," he did not tramp Fleet Street next morning, a journalist in quest of salary; instead, he sat in the private office of the Diadem, a playwright discussing a production. And the metamorphosis was so swift, it seemed so marvelous, that in moments he lost the thread of what Erskine was saying, and again saw the gray Floors of the Bultfontein Imperial scorching in the sun, and heard the whir of the tubs upon the wires.

It was amazing what agreeable qualities Erskine revealed, in the light of an accepted play; the pompous stranger turned out to be a good fellow, with a sense of humor. It was amazing, too, to discover by degrees the thousand and one possibilities for blundering that attached to a production, the encyclopædic knowledge that was possessed by scenic artists. He was interrogated as to whether he required an "arbor," or a "summer house" in the garden act. In the manuscript he had written both

words, and it appeared that they were not interchangeable terms. The technical distinction between an "arbor" and a "summer house" was explained to the author for the first time. It was pointed out to him also that his directions for that act included a bank of rhododendrons, but that a line in the dialogue showed that the season was too far advanced for rhododendrons to be in flower. "What did he propose?" It began to surprise him that Erskine, who passed his life amid disconcerting queries of this nature, could preserve so unruffled a front.

Of all the surprises, however, the least pleasant was furnished by the rehearsals. To write a play, and to produce it are two widely different things. The men who can do both are rare, indeed. Hillier sat in the stalls, blankly realizing his incompetence. A dozen times he attempted diffidently to set an actor right, only to discover that mere words are seldom illuminative to the average actor. To dilate to him on the precise meaning of a line, is usually to tell him nothing; in order to enlighten him, the dramatist must deliver the line, and this Hillier could not do. Or if he gave the correct inflection once, he missed it the second time, from over-eagerness.

Again, he would see a piece of "business" marred, a turn, a gesture, done quite differently from the way he had intended; but he couldn't demonstrate what he had intended—couldn't get up on the stage and say: "Not like that, like this!" Lacking stage training, afraid of his arms and legs, he knew it would be to make himself ridiculous. It was Erskine who courteously effected the improvements.

A vast respect for Erskine grew within him as he watched the daily progress of his drama, beheld the effortless touches that transformed the meaningless to the significant, the muddle to the picture. It wasn't so easy to be an actor-manager as he had thought. A good many press men who laughed at Erskine on the stage would have found him, at rehearsal, a revelation.

But there was a peck of worries to every act, and it was a four-act piece. Even for Erskine to do all that was necessary, in the time at his disposal, seemed beyond the bounds of possibility. And then, when Erskine had accomplished it—when the miracle had been worked, and the author was in a seventh heaven of unanticipated bliss—everything went worse than ever at the press rehearsal. Hillier left the theatre, with Crosbie, at three a. m., despairing. The silent streets were not more desolate than his mood.

"What a ghastly failure it'll be to-morrow!" he muttered.

"Buck up," said the journalist; "a bad dress rehearsal means a good first night. Every mummer I ever knew has told me that."

"Dear old chap!" he groaned. "Yesterday it went so well! Erskine has got the blues, too: 'We must hope for the best,' he said to me at the end. That's what the doctor says when the patient's dying. I don't know what has gone wrong with all the scenery. All the doors and windows stuck, there wasn't an infernal thing that would open. And look at Miss Vernon's frock against those red walls! It gave me neuralgia."

"Well, she isn't going to wear it, the frock needn't keep you awake."

"MacFarlane plays the part like a pantaloon. He hasn't doddered like that before. I was in torture while he was on; he killed every scene!"

"You heard what Erskine said. It'll be all right, take it from me. You shall stand me a bottle to-morrow night on the strength of it."

"Out of your own money!" said Hillier. He had been compelled to borrow, after all, but with the piece in rehearsal, he had not minded very much; even should it fail, it must surely yield enough to repay that loan. "Crosbie, if you ever do first-night notices again, deal gently with the rottenest show that ever gave you the hump—remember what it has meant to all the people behind."

Fortunately, he slept till late. "Fortunately" because the day held nine

times as many hours as go to the making of any ordinary day, and by the middle of the afternoon he began to feel as if evening would never arrive. Crosbie had been provided with a stall ticket, but Hillier, himself, did not intend to witness the performance; what had originally promised to be the treat of his life had assumed, to his increasing nervousness, the aspect of an unbearable ordeal. His own part was done, and his presence among the audience could serve no purpose. It would be enough, he thought, to inquire at intervals how the piece was going. For him to sit in a fauteuil, helpless, watching his work miss fire, scene by scene, would be nothing short of agony.

If Bella had been true to him! If by any chance the play succeeded, and Bella had been true! Among his complex thoughts, that one recurred persistently. Was it in her mind, as well? Yes, he knew that if she were in London, she couldn't escape it—that the Diadem announcements, his name upon the boardings, were flaring the past to her at every turn. He knew she must reflect what the verdict of to-night would once have meant to her; knew that, in Regent's Park, Mr. Marsden's wife was wondering, and looking back.

Perhaps she was in the theatre? The foyer was full when he passed it on his way to the stage door. He spoke briefly to Erskine, while the actor-manager was dressing, and went back to the streets as the orchestra was tuning up. The bow of every fiddle seemed scraping his inside. For a moment he wished that he were going to slink into the circle, but Erskine had congratulated him on his decision; to change his mind at the last minute would be silly.

More carriages were driving up when he returned to the front of the house. Two dramatic critics whom he knew by sight, were strolling in. Their expression was discomfitingly bored. He recognized that this night of nights was to them but a night of tedious routine. Still, he thought that they needn't have looked quite so unemotional.

Carriages and hansoms continued to arrive interminably. The curtain must

be up by this time; a lot of the dialogue would be indistinguishable, thanks to the noise of the late comers. He eyed them with resentment. A fussy, portly man, with an opera glass, and a rustling wife, was especially noxious to him. He questioned how many lines the couple's passage through the stalls would drown, and trembled lest the lines were vital.

Perhaps a drink wouldn't be a bad idea? He proposed to saunter to the Strand, and found that he was striding there as if for a wager. Apparently the superfluous speed had made him hot, for he grew conscious that his head and face streamed with perspiration. He mopped them with his handkerchief, and panted like a man carrying a portmanteau that was too heavy for him. Through the crowds on the pavements, and the traffic in the roads, he saw, with his mind's eye, the stage of the Diadem, and the opening set of "All the World Wondered."

In a Strand buffet he ordered a neat brandy, and regretted his choice the next instant, for an acquaintance exclaimed: "Hallo! Keeping up your pluck?" Hillier laughed feebly, and after another jocular allusion to the piece, the man digressed into a long anecdote. To pretend to any interest in it, to listen for the point, and simulate hilarity when it was reached, demanded an exhausting effort. But the meeting served to pass the time. When he escaped from the inflection, it was not much too soon to retrace his steps to the theatre.

He entered guiltily, avoiding every one's gaze. Perhaps he was damned already? By the strains of the sickening fiddle he knew that the first act was over. He tapped at Erskine's door. He thanked God that Erskine's smile was bright.

"Went very well. White waistcoat, Cole!" This was to the dresser. "Nothing to be anxious about. MacFarlane was all right. Brush that coat! Come round again presently, my dear fellow!"

The call boy's summons shrilled through the passage: "Beginners sec-

ond act, please!" So far, so good! The theatre was suffocating—back to breathe some air!

He made for the Embankment now. Its comparative quietude was welcome, and he wondered that he had not thought of the place before. Hadn't it been a press joke for years that a certain playwright spent all his first nights on the Embankment? He found a vacant bench, for not all the vagrant habitués of the thoroughfare had yet arrived, and tried to persuade himself that disaster would find him fairly philosophic.

The occupation was a dreary one. He strode on toward the Temple, timid of returning too soon. But he had pawned his watch, and he returned too late. The second act had finished, and the third was in progress when he reached the dressing room again. Erskine was "on." Irresolute he loitered in the passage, hoping to gather from one of the company how things had gone. And while he loitered, there came to his ears a strange and unforgettable sound—the sound of a volley of applause, as it reverberates behind the scenes. The dramatist shivered violently, and the next moment knew that his eyes were full of tears.

And from this point he knew, or realized very little until some one had pulled him to the wings, and Erskine was clapping him on the shoulder, and reiterating: "Five curtains, five curtains, five curtains, Hillier, my boy!"

The pit and gallery were shouting themselves hoarse.

"They're calling for you. Go on!"

"I don't want to, I thought that was out of fashion?"

"Fashion be damned!" panted Erskine. "Go on! Come on with me!"

The packed house was a dazzle, he bowed to it blindly. Only while the curtain dropped, he distinguished two men in the stalls, who stood and applauded with generous palms. He prayed that they were of the press.

"Come and have some champagne!"

"Where's Crosbie?" he stammered. "I want my pal."

And so Crosbie was fetched from

the step where he was waiting; and "You'll never look back," exclaimed Crosbie, "you're made!" There was a chorus of congratulation, a babel of prophecy. Strangers shook hands with Hillier. Everybody was elated, excited, rather ridiculously enthusiastic. And the only remaining question was what the critics were writing in Fleet Street.

CHAPTER X.

Dramatic successes are of more kinds than one, even omitting the *succès d'estime*. There is the piece that delights the public, and that the press deride; there is the piece that the public flock to see, and that the press treat leniently. And, at lengthy intervals, there is the piece that conquers the public, and the press, as well. This was the kind of success attained by "All the World Wondered."

The author awoke to read columns of eulogy, and to learn during the day that the Diadem box-office clerk had been incessantly occupied. Hillier had the unusual good fortune to capture both kudos and cash. Leading editors begged for "interviews," and photographs for publication. His fees for the first week, after deducting the sum paid in advance and on account, were nearly a hundred pounds. A contract for the American rights—in which Erskine had stipulated for a half share—brought him, in advance and on account, five hundred pounds. Very shortly a touring company was to provide him with additional royalties from the provinces. There were also applications for the Australian rights, and various London managers, who had left his letters unanswered during nine years, wrote deferential notes, hoping that they, too, "might be privileged to produce a play from his brilliant pen." His sources of revenue seemed suddenly unlimited, and if Crosbie had not put down a firm foot Friend Crosbie would have been transferred to elegant quarters, and habited by a Savile Row tailor.

Crosbie drew the line at dinners, and because Hillier shrank from re-

moving while Crosbie clung to Soho, Hillier stayed on in Soho, too. He remained in the Soho lodging for the present, though the drawing power of "All the World Wondered" suffered no diminution and the checks came tumbling in so fast that the figures in his first bank book were more incredible to the young man than anything in the "Arabian Nights."

But one change in Crosbie's surroundings he contrived to effect; he banished the landlady's druggets and beds and tables, and refurnished the rooms with Chippendale bookcases and Turkey rugs. And it amused him to reflect that, when he did remove to the Temple, or elsewhere, Crosbie couldn't compel him to take them away.

Another thing that pleased him was to repay the amount of Somerset's remittance, and to suggest a loan of a hundred or two if it would be any use.

"If Bella had been true to him!" Again, and yet again. One day, in the Strand, he met Tom Woodward. Two or three months earlier the actor would have affected not to see him, but a celebrated dramatist was not a man to be cut. Woodward's congratulations were effusive. With a strong strain of sentiment he insisted on their having a drink together. His reference to his daughter was condemnatory: "God knew that he had implored the gy-url to be loyal to George!" In the saloon, he proposed strenuously that George should obtain an engagement for him to play Erskine's part on tour.

The meeting was painful to Hillier, and yet fascinating, because it yielded news of Bella. He heard that she was in France now, at a place called Pourville, near Dieppe. When he took leave of her father, the temptation to see her was pulsing in him. Why shouldn't he go to Pourville if he liked?

For the next two days he imagined that he wrestled with the temptation, while he was only nursing it.

"Old chap," he burst out, "I'm going to Pourville!"

"Why Pourville?" asked Crosbie.

But Hillier didn't explain to him why he was going to Pourville.

And he didn't explain it to himself. He said that his motive was curiosity; he said that it was a vindictive desire to flaunt his success in her face; he said everything but that he was still in love with her.

He crossed in the morning, and was jostled in the customs at Dieppe between three and four o'clock on a sunny afternoon. Pourville was reached in a motor car a quarter of an hour later. As he entered it, it looked so primitive that its vogue surprised him—a handful of yellow villas built by caprice on the shore. The car swerved into the courtyard of the Grand Hotel and Casino. Visitors were lolling at tea tables; across a blaze of begonias, a stringed orchestra, in green costumes, was playing Chopin's second nocturne; within, a croupier droned mechanically: "*Le jeu est fait. Rien ne va plus!*"

"Yes, monsieur, by rare good fortune, one room was at liberty, but one of the expensive rooms facing the sea."

The expense was no drawback. Strange happening! He was conducted to the first floor, where a window, framed in persiennes, overlooked more little tables on a terrace, and the bathing tents along the beach.

"How many hotels are there here?" he inquired.

"There is but one now, monsieur, this!"

Good! Unless the Marsdens had taken a villa for the season, Bella and he were in the same house.

When he had washed, he went down to the musicians and the teapots. A little motor bus brought home some English golfers from the links, a party of French people sauntered in from tennis, an American opened a conversation with him. Pourville seemed undeniably pleasant as he lounged in the basket chair, well dressed, well served, well favored. He looked back at Bultfontein, and returned thanks.

She came into the courtyard listlessly, shutting her sunshade. For an instant it was doubtful whether she would turn toward the staircase, or the seats. She turned to the seats, and their gaze met.

He saw her flinch. Then her eyes hardened and she ignored him. "Tea!" he heard her say to the waiter. Behind the begonias, the songster of the band was warbling "When Other Lips." It must be rather awkward for her!

Her knees were tremulous. Heaven be praised that he couldn't see her unless he blatantly moved his chair! But if she had only gone inside! How odious, how inexpressibly hateful! She wouldn't stay, she'd go to Varengeville Plage, or back to England, or—— But how could she explain her sudden dislike of the place to Arthur? Arthur! Now, George would see him, the old man to whom she had sold herself. Would see him and despise her more. Oh, that wretched singer, lading out his sentimental ditty, it was making her ridiculous! Well, the situation couldn't be agreeable to George, either—he might go away? Perhaps if she had bowed, it would have been more discreet, more dignified? But she had had no time to consider, and her impulse had been to shun him. What a swell he had become, what a difference that play had made to him! Wonderful! If only it had been possible to foresee!

Hillier left her in the courtyard. So she didn't mean to speak to him, he had been wrong in supposing there would be excuses and appeals for forgiveness? He was to be cut! Yes, "a rum world!" The *élégante* who had passed him like a stranger used to kiss him, with her arms about his neck. Well, she should find out how little her inconstancy affected him! It promised to be no difficult matter to make acquaintances here, she should find out that he could be inconstant, too!

It would, in point of fact, have been a difficult matter to avoid making acquaintances here, although the majority of the visitors were English. They would have spent a season in Folkestone or Brighton without exchanging so much as a word, but they were "on the Continent," and on the Continent they were, for the nonce, informal.

Pourville, he discovered, was to all intents and purposes, a house party. In the evening, people consoled with one

another on the vagaries of *petits chevaux*, or waltzed at the invitation of the green-garbed orchestra, which discoursed in the rooms after dinner; in the morning they all met on the miniature terrace and bathed and borrowed novels; in the afternoon, they drifted to golf or tennis, or greeted one another again in the little cake shops of Dieppe.

The last thing to be learned was names, but the name of "George Hillier" had been very prominent in the English papers lately, and the Grand Hotel and Casino speedily ascertained which of the men was George Hillier.

"My dear, what do you think?" exclaimed Mr. Marsden. "That good-looking fellow who kept playing on *cinq* last night is Hillier, the author of 'All the World Wondered.'"

And Bella drawled: "Oh, is he? I hate authors. So would you if you had seen as much of them as I have."

Mr. Marsden hadn't seen much of them; to chat with a "distinguished dramatist" would be a highly agreeable novelty. Also, Peggy was here, and a friendship with George Hillier might prove exceedingly valuable to Peggy's future. Hillier found the elderly gentleman constantly beside him at the Tables, constantly favoring the corners where he himself was sitting, in fine, constantly seeking to be cordial. It was more than the ex-fiancé had bargained for, but it wasn't to be averted. During the next day he had conversed with Mr. Marsden twice on the terrace, and by the time dinner was over and he lit a cigar in the courtyard, Mr. Marsden joined him like a friend.

"I may tell you that I saw your piece before I left town, Mr. Hillier," he observed presently, with the air of announcing something important and unexpected.

"I hope you had a pleasant evening?"

"I have to thank you for an unusual treat. We don't often get a piece in England that goes so deep into life."

"You're very good," said Hillier. "Pourville seems rather jolly?"

"Yes, a very charming little place. I am quite pleased we decided on it,

quite pleased. The—er—gregariousness of our countrymen abroad is refreshing, don't you think? We seem to—er—expand?"

"Yes, I've noticed it; it's rather remarkable. The *petits chevaux* seem to unite us."

"A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind! Really, I have been losing too much at *petits chevaux*! But in the evening there's nothing else to do. My women folk, of course, dance, but— By the way, Mr. Hillier, I should like to—er—I don't think you know my wife and niece?"

Hillier was troubled by a cough before he answered. "It would delight me to be presented," he murmured.

Play had not begun, the *administration* spun the little horses alluringly, but the crowd turned obstinate backs to the Tables, dawdling over coffee. The ladies were on a couch; Bella elaborately dressed.

"Mr. George Hillier, my wife. Er—Mr. Hillier, Miss Marsden."

The woman bent her head, the girl said: "How d'ye do." There were vacant chairs beside the couch. Mr. Marsden sat, and Hillier could do no less.

"I was just telling Mr. Hillier how much pleasure his piece gave to us."

"Oh, charming!" muttered Bella. Her face was colorless.

He bowed acknowledgment. Their eyes met again, and he read in hers that his revenge had begun.

The girl was regarding him with interest. Because he could hit on nothing else to say, he inquired if she had seen the piece, too.

"Yes," she said, in a voice he liked. "It's fine. It'd be finer still if you hadn't dragged them together at the last, for the sake of a happy ending."

He was suddenly natural. "Eh?"

She laughed. "Well, didn't you? You don't think they'd ever have come together again really?"

There are things that an author can't be expected to confess; he temporized. But he wondered a little; no one else had said this to him. He had only said it to himself—anathematizing the need

for sending a British audience home with a dab of jam on their palates.

Her uncle's glance was apprehensive. "I do not think," he remarked, "that—er—it's within the province of a young actress to criticise a dramatist, Peggy."

So? She was on the stage! "You act, Miss Marsden?"

"When I get the chance, Mr. Hillier."

"How do you like it?"

"The lady is dissatisfied with her progress," said her uncle.

"And with her talents," said the lady. "I dare say, I should like it immensely if I were a genius."

"You want a good deal, don't you?" scoffed Bella.

"No, not to be happy, Aunt Bella," said the girl seriously. Hillier detected that they didn't care much for each other.

When he had left the group it surprised him to perceive that he was thinking of that answer of Miss Marsden's pretty nearly as often as of Bella's constraint. Why "to be happy"? Presumably the niece was a moneyed amateur; what did she know of anxiety? And yet, somehow, she didn't look like a moneyed amateur, she had the face of a girl who had come closer to realities than that. He could have imagined her in a Chelsea studio, or on an editor's staircase—and she was idling fashionably in a Grand Hotel.

It was curious that the situation had not been convulsive to him. He realized it. He had sat face to face with Bella again, and spoken to her! How was it there had been no hurricane of the senses, no whirlwind of emotion? He had been tolerably at his ease, had felt less agitation than when he first beheld her here. The thought was discomfiting; had he—had he, after all, loved her less deeply than he had supposed?

CHAPTER XL.

The next day he heard that Mrs. Marsden had a headache and was remaining in her room till luncheon. Her husband mentioned it to him after

breakfast, and Hillier spent the morning in Mr. and Miss Marsden's company.

It was not till the following afternoon, however, that he talked with the girl alone. As he came down the flights of steps from the cliffs, she was on the terrace, and he told her of the walk he had "discovered."

"There are lots of pretty walks," she said. "You should go to Petit-Apperville if you haven't been yet; in fact, you should go if you have! I think Pourville itself is a hideous little spot; it's the country all round that's lovely. The walk to Petit-Apperville one can never get tired of."

"Nobody seems particularly keen on the 'lovely,' I notice; I had it all to myself up there."

"Oh, well; fashionable people!" she said.

"Don't you include yourself among them?"

"I?" She smiled. Her pale face was beautiful when she smiled. "Since when have struggling actresses been 'fashionable'?"

He smiled, too, but diffidently: "Since when have fashionable young ladies been 'struggling actresses'?"

"Oh, I see!" she said. "That's funny!"

"What?"

"The impression I've created. If we had met in London, shall I tell you how it would probably have been?"

"How?"

"You'd have seen me being snubbed at a stage door, and if I had plucked up the courage to address you at all, it would have been very, very respectfully. Not to say 'timidly.'" Her voice was suddenly grave. "I'm on the stage from necessity, Mr. Hillier, not from conceit."

"I beg your pardon," he murmured. "I didn't understand." After a pause he added: "I'm afraid you must find it an awfully hard fight?"

"I think I made a foolish choice. I—Things happened a little while ago, I had to do something or other. It was my uncle who suggested the stage for me. He was very good, but the en-

gagement he got for me didn't last because the manageress gave up acting, and since then I've seen a good deal of the hardships. I've had to find engagements for myself. The stage is very pleasant to the great stars, and the important dramatists, Mr. Hillier, but you don't know how brutal it is to the nobodies."

"Don't I? Do you think 'All the World' was my first play? The stage was brutal to *me* for ten years."

"You were writing plays for ten years?"

"About that. And not in Grand Hotels. In difficulties."

"Really?" Her eyes were attentive. "Somehow I imagined you a favorite of fortune."

"And somehow I imagined *you* a rich amateur."

"I live in lodgings in Hampstead."

"I live in lodgings in Soho."

They laughed. After another pause, he said:

"Can you act? If I could, I'd like to be useful."

"It's awfully good of you."

"It'd be a novel sensation."

"I don't know, I shouldn't like to say." She hesitated. "Do you really mean it?"

"Yes," he affirmed. "Why?"

"I think I could play the girl in your piece, if I got the chance."

"Dora Villiers?"

"Yes. I think I could; it isn't a very big part. Oh, I know it would be big for *me*, of course, but I do think I should be all right in it."

"I expect Erskine has some one in view. It would mean going on tour, you know that? It would be in another company that he's sending out, if I could manage it at all. Would you mind? You'd have to leave your people."

"My mother. But I have to work like anybody else to-day. Do you think of me as a practical person. I've got to earn a salary. I'd jump at an engagement for one-night stands, even!"

"It's awfully hard lines on you," said Hillier sympathetically. "It's difficult to realize, too, but—well, I won't forget

again! I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write to London for a copy of the manuscript, and then, if you'll read the part to me——"

"I *am* so grateful to you!" she exclaimed, giving him her hand.

"Oh, don't be," he said apprehensively, "don't be grateful yet. And, anyhow, I don't want you to be grateful; I'd like to do it. I knocked at doors that wouldn't open, for so long, myself. I—I didn't suppose there was a ghost of a chance of it, but, do you know, the first time you spoke to me, I thought I should like to be pals with you?"

"You're being a wonderful pal," she said.

"I will be, if I can, honor bright!"

When the dressing gong sounded, he reentered the hotel with her in capital spirits, and it occurred to him some hours later that his purpose in coming to Pourville had been forgotten all the evening. Indeed, since dinner, his active grievance against Bella had been that her presence prevented him from approaching her niece.

He wrote to Crosbie for the manuscript without delay, but it was only when it arrived that he did justice to his interest in the matter. If Miss Peggy Marsden proved to be too amateurish he knew that he would be keenly disappointed. And he would feel very guilty for having inspired false hopes. Let her but speak the lines well, and he would move heaven and earth to induce Erskine to coach her in the "business," but if she couldn't even read intelligently, to recommend her would be impossible.

He welcomed her suggestion that she should familiarize herself with the part for a day or two before inviting his verdict, and when the ordeal was over he was vastly relieved. His verdict was sincerely favorable. How much coaching she would require, how she bore herself on a stage, of course, remained to be seen, but he had no fear that Erskine would cavil at her reading.

Four or five days, and the circumstances had made them like old friends;

it was quite frankly that the girl said to him:

"I wish I could ask my aunt to rehearse me in it before I go to the Diadem. She used to be on the stage, herself. Did you know?"

"Oh!" he said for answer. "Can't you ask her?"

"I don't think she'd be vitally interested."

"Why? Don't you get on well together?"

"Oh, we 'get on' all right, I'm her guest. But"—she laughed—"I don't think I should have been here if it hadn't been for Uncle Arthur." Her eyes suddenly interrogated him. "You don't like her much, do you?"

"I?" he cried, taken aback. "What makes you say so?"

"You hardly ever speak to her. You never come over to us, if she's there. I've noticed it."

"Oh, well, there are plenty of people here I haven't had an opportunity of talking to much. Tell me! If Erskine asks me what experience you've had, what am I to say? He'll probably want to know."

"I've never had a part as good as this yet. I mean, in any modern piece. I've had a few good Shakespearean parts."

"Shakespearean parts? Have you really? Whom with?"

"With my aunt. She had her own company on the road, it was with her I began. She had advertised for a novice, and my uncle went to see her for me. That was how he first met her."

"I see," murmured Hillier. His thoughts sped back to a moment in a hansom cab. So she had put in that advertisement, after all! And that was how she had met Marsden; the advertisement had landed the desired premium, and a rich husband, as well. "It was a perfectly hateful idea, I don't know how it ever entered my head," she had said in the hansom!

"Well, I'll pitch it strong to Erskine," he continued, "and I'll tell him you'll rehearse on trial. I may do that, mayn't I?"

"Rather!" she said. "Rehearse on trial? Yes! Miss Peggy Marsden, celebrity, will consent. Is he very alarming?"

"He's very nice when you know him. He won't be 'alarming' to you, anyhow. If he doesn't consider you're at home in the part, I think I can promise he'll say so to you privately. And, you know, this isn't the only piece I shall ever write; there'll be a part for you in another one, some day."

"I want to say just one thing to you," she said, with a tremor in her voice. "If he does try me, and I don't suit, you aren't to feel bad about it. I mean, you aren't to feel bad about the way I'm feeling. I should hate to think that, after all you had done, I was giving you a bad time. You needn't write to me, saying how sorry you are. I shall understand."

She was an exceedingly nice girl, thought Hillier again.

To Bella, meanwhile, those four or five days had been well-nigh insufferable. It was not due to chance that while Hillier was in the Casino, writing to Erskine, the lady sought stationery. She was very pale as he turned and saw her. It was early, and excepting for a waiter, hovering in the doorway, they were the only occupants of the rooms.

"George!"

He rose, not without dismay: "Mrs. Marsden? You're looking for something—a pen?"

"I've something to say," she murmured. "I want to ask a favor of you."

"Of me?"

"I want you to go away."

"I don't understand?"

"Oh, don't make pretenses! You don't suppose it's pleasant to me to see you here?"

"I haven't so much vanity."

"It's intolerable. I can't stand it."

"Surely you exaggerate the annoyance? I'm a fairly inoffensive person."

Agitation was mastering her, her voice shook. "That's all you have to say?"

"All that's advisable, Mrs. Marsden."

"George," she exclaimed, "if you knew how it was, you wouldn't think so badly of me. The tour had failed. I couldn't get 'dates.' Was I to go and beg for small parts in tour again? If there had only been something to look forward to, it'd have been different; I could have seen it through. I'd have borne anything. There didn't seem a ghost of a chance for either of us. I thought it'd mean our waiting years and years, even if you came back at all."

"I'm not reproaching you," he said more gently. "Your letter played havoc with me, but that's over, thank God—it was pretty bad while it lasted. I've no bitterness against you now."

"Oh, I know that's the pose," she scoffed. "You needn't trouble to explain! You've quite 'recovered,' you don't care a pin any more; in fact, you're of the opinion that it was 'all for the best,' and I'm to be shown how jolly you are without me! Do you think I'm a child, do you suppose I'm such an idiot as to be duped by your private theatricals? No 'bitterness'? Every hour that you've spent in the place has been a revengeful insult to me."

"On my honor, you're wrong!"

"Well, I ask you to stop it! Isn't it enough?"

"I swear you're doing me an injustice. Whatever intentions I may have had at one time, whatever my idea was when I saw you here first—and I'll admit I'm ashamed of it—I assure you solemnly that I haven't tried to make things painful for you since."

"Every single thing you've done, you've done to mortify and wound me! What are you paying attentions to that girl for, except to humiliate me?"

"The past has nothing whatever to do with my friendship for Miss Marsden."

"Rubbish!"

"If you discredit what I say, why question me?"

"Of course, I discredit what you say. You're persuading her she's a great actress; you're trying to put an amateur, that you've just met, over the

heads of women who have been in the profession for years. And the past has 'nothing whatever to do with it'? Oh, no! It wasn't a moral lesson to *me*, was it? I wasn't to understand what much finer things you could have done for *me* now, was I? Oh, it was a great scheme to make love in front of me to a girl in my husband's family! But the little fool may think you're serious, you know. You're being a beastly cad to her as well."

"I daren't anticipate the good fortune of interesting Miss Marsden so much," he said frigidly.

Her startled eyes searched his face. "What do you mean by that?"

Hillier's mouth was set hard.

"Are you going to tell me that you care about her really?"

"I am not going to tell you so, but it wouldn't be astonishing."

She stood staring at him, motionless. Almost for the first time she wondered if she had misread his motive, for the first time she came near to believing his assertion—and belief dazed her. To think him brutal by design, because he adored her still, had been torture mixed with gratification; to think him unwittingly brutal, because he loved somebody else, was overwhelming.

"My God!" she gasped. "If I thought it was true—Oh, you couldn't do such a thing! It's impossible!"

"Impossible?"

"Think what it would mean! To meet you all my life, to see you the husband of my own niece! I'd never allow it. George, you're only saying it to scare me, aren't you? I treated you badly, I know. I'm not complaining, I deserve all you've done. And you've got even. I've had an awful time, I've owned up. But it has gone far enough, hasn't it? You won't be a devil to me, you don't want me to go through that? I couldn't bear it, the humbug of it, day after day. I should give myself away, they'd see I was in love with you!"

"Hush!" he cried. "What are you saying?"

"Tell me you'll go to-morrow, that you'll never see her any more!"

"I can't tell you that," he said. "I hope to see her."

"Oh!" She struck hysterically at the desk. "I wonder you've got the nerve! Have you forgotten what we used to be to each other?"

"Are you in a position to remind me? Look here! I like Miss Marsden; I like her immensely. And I'm bound to see her often, because I've promised to try to help her. It's very 'previous' to say any more than that, but as you've raised the question, perhaps it had better be faced. Assuming that I ever did ask her to marry me, and she said 'yes,' I shouldn't sacrifice her happiness, and mine, because you threw me over, when I was doing my best for you, and gave me a year of hell. I'll be hanged if I can see any reason why I should suffer through you twice!"

"Her uncle should forbid the engagement," she said breathlessly.

"I think her uncle would be rather pleased with it."

"Now, perhaps. Not if he knew the truth."

"And who would enlighten him? You?"

"Yes; if it came to that, I would!"

"You'd have to tell him that you were engaged to me at the time you accepted him, and that you kept the fact dark."

"How do you know I kept it dark?"

"Because he has been glad to make my acquaintance."

"Perhaps I didn't happen to mention the man's name. You're being too clever."

"If you had ever mentioned being engaged at all, you'd have mentioned the man's name on the day I arrived in Pourville—and have left the place on the next, instead of putting up with a situation that you say has been abominable. You'd have to tell him that you kept the fact dark when you accepted him, and that you kept it dark again here; and that you're only confessing at last because you can't bear your former lover to marry another woman! I don't think you would find the story easy, Mrs. Marsden."

"You wouldn't find it easy to marry that girl," she said, "I can promise you

that! You won't find me so helpless as you think!"

Then she returned to her chair in the courtyard, and Hillier went on with his letter.

CHAPTER XII.

She did not tell her husband the facts, but she told him that the place didn't agree with her, and that she wanted to go to Falaiseville, instead. She said he must see for himself that the air of Pourville was making her ill; and Marsden, much disturbed, telegraphed for rooms at once, and took her to Falaiseville on the morrow.

Peggy, of course, went with them, to her secret regret. She found the scenery of Falaiseville—a beautiful spot that they had admired while motoring one day—much less congenial than talking to Hillier. Indeed, Bella herself chafed when they were installed, for though the rooms were comfortable enough, and the cooking was excellent, the romantically situated hotel had few English or American visitors, and small acquaintance with sanitation. If it had not been that theatrical touring had given her a horror of railway journeys, and that their stay in Normandy was drawing to a close, she would have assented to Marsden's proposal that they should resign themselves to removing again.

To Hillier, Peggy's departure was no less distasteful than to Peggy. But, though he knew where they had gone, it was impossible, after Bella's remonstrance, for him to follow. Pourville seemed to him very empty, and the extent to which he found himself missing the girl was by way of being a revelation. Though he had declared that he liked her immensely, he hadn't realized that her companionship meant so much as this. It was not that he surrendered gently to sentiment, quite the reverse—he had been mistaken in the permanence of his emotions once, and had a sensible man's fear of repeating the error; he tried to banish sentiment—and tried in vain.

His mood was lightened by an answer from Erskine, saying that the lady

had better call at the Diadem without delay. Erskine was apparently under the impression that she was in London, and it remained to be seen whether she would think it good enough to return to England on the vague prospect of an engagement. But the note, at least, provided a reason for writing to her.

"My dear child, you'd be spoiling your holiday for nothing!" insisted Bella, when she heard of the letter. "Erskine is just being polite to Mr. Hillier; he won't put you into the part, it isn't likely. Be a sensible girl and stay where you are!"

Peggy was a very sensible girl—she left. She hadn't had her graceful shoulder to the wheel for over a year without learning never to let opportunity find her napping. It had been a bitter year for her; the wheel had bruised her badly sometimes—the wheel had crushed some of her illusions about men—and that George Hillier occupied her thoughts meant much more than it would have meant in the case either of the ordinary society girl, or of the ordinary young actress.

Peggy had viewed life from both standpoints. Before the financial eggs came to grief in a rotten basket, she had known men in ballrooms; to-day, she knew men in the marketplace—where they looked less chivalrous. It had been demonstrated to her that men offered "devotion" more glibly than they offered help, and she was very far from underestimating what Hillier had done for her.

More warmly still did she appreciate it when she had her interview with Erskine. She had been "in the profession" long enough to understand that the cordiality of Erskine's manner was attributable neither to her abilities nor her good looks. It was a new and delightful experience to be received graciously by a West End manager, and when he suggested her "just running through the part with him on the stage," her head spun at the honor.

Fortunately, it did not spin too fast to prevent her keeping it, and Erskine expressed approval. She left the Diadem, engaged to play *Dora Villiers* at

three pounds a week, and a notice of the first "call" reached her a few days later.

It was only natural that she had communicated the great news, in an enthusiastic letter, to Hillier; and it was only natural that Hillier, being a young dramatist, should attend the rehearsals of the provincial company.

He found it an interesting occupation, although professional etiquette forbade his talking to Peggy a tithe as much as he wished to do. It was good to watch her, to hear her speaking his lines—better still, to take her somewhere to tea when business was over. It was even good to listen to her complaining—and when a dramatist finds it good to hear an actress complain, there is no doubt about his being in love with her.

"I've a grievance!" she proclaimed once, during the luncheon interval. "I thought I was engaged to play *Dora Villiers*—I'm not! I'm engaged to copy the performance of Miss Forsyth, who's playing *Dora Villiers* at the Diadem. I don't agree with all she does—though I dare say it sounds very conceited to say so—I don't think she's right. Surely, if I'm an actress at all, I ought to be allowed to exercise my intelligence!"

"Ah!" said Hillier.

"What does 'Ah' mean?"

"In the theatre, Miss Marsden, it means that Erskine's judgment is infallible. Erskine wishes this company to copy the London company—therefore, they must do it."

"And outside the theatre?"

"At tea, I may express a different opinion."

"Will the tea opinion assist matters?"

"Not in the least. It will be sympathetic, but unavailing. When I've written a lot more plays, perhaps, and am an autocrat—"

"You'll give me a part to do as I like with? Oh, well, I must go on 'parroting,' then; I'm sorry I worried you about it. Am I a nuisance?"

"Second act, please!" called the prompter; and as *Dora Villiers* opened the second act, and she had to run,

there was no time for Hillier to reply at length whether she was a nuisance or not.

Not long after this he went to see her in Hampstead; he had been presented to her mother, a gentle, colorless lady, at one of the rehearsals, and had availed himself of her invitation with alacrity. At Hampstead, he learned that Bella and her husband were back in town; and only a few days later Peggy told him that her uncle had typhoid, the result, it was thought, of the sojourn in picturesque Falaiseville.

Hillier was sorry to hear it, for he rather liked the man, and Peggy, who had a warm affection for him, was evidently anxious. However, the next bulletins were encouraging, and by the time the tour started it was understood that he was progressing very favorably.

For the first three weeks, the company was to play at outlying theatres, and Peggy would still live at home. On the opening night, Hillier took old Mrs. Marsden in a box to see her daughter act—or, as the daughter said, to see her "parrot"—and there was an informal little supper party in a suburban restaurant, to celebrate the young actress' "triumph."

On subsequent nights, he often went to the theatre, too, and escorted Peggy back to Hampstead. Some of the journeys occupied an hour; he had explained that she "couldn't make them alone so late."

One evening he explained more.

"Is it impossible to persuade you that I'm not an amateur?" she had demanded. "It's exceedingly kind of you, but I'd rather you didn't meet me again. Really, I mean it!"

"Of course, if you don't want me, I can't come," he said. "I thought your mother liked somebody to see you home."

"That's very unselfish of you. But I want my mother to grasp the fact that I'm capable of looking after myself."

They were in a train on the Hampstead Tube; no other passengers were near them, and there was no one to observe the reproachful gaze that the man

near the door bent upon the pretty girl beside him, or to draw deductions from the pretty girl's sudden interest in an advertisement of Dashaway Fountain Pens.

"I'm sorry I've bored you!"

"You know you haven't bored me." Her voice was nervous. "Everything has been tremendously good of you, but——"

"But what?"

"Well, it's unnecessary; I'm used to going back alone. Do you suppose there'll be anybody to take your place in the provinces?"

"I hope there won't! In the provinces, you'll live nearer the theatre. And, anyhow, I wish you weren't going to the provinces."

The advertisement absorbed her.

He leaned a shade nearer to her cheek. "Peggy!"

"Mr. Hillier?"

"I don't want you to go away. I love you; I want you to be my wife."

The guard obtruded himself abruptly, and bawled something that was intended for the name of a station. The man and the girl assumed an air of being profoundly uninterested in each other. Several wet umbrellas were trailed across their knees, without attracting their attention.

"Peggy? Can you care for me a little bit?"

She wanted to put her hand on his, and was fearing tensely that an irrelative intruder was going to take the opposite seat. The intruder was human; he glanced at Hillier enviously, and presented them with his back.

"Yes!" she whispered. And the hand was seized as if it were never to be free again. And the advertisement of fountain pens had vanished, and the passengers were merely mist, and it wasn't the Hampstead Tube at all; it was a pleasance in Paradise.

"Oh, my love, I love you so much!"

"I'm glad!" she said chokily.

"When will you marry me, Peggy? I've been wanting to call you 'Peggy' for such a long time!"

"Have you?"

"Peggy?"

"Yes—George? Oh, you've hurt my hand!"

Some seconds were passed in assuring him that the agony wasn't overwhelming.

"I was going to say: 'When will you marry me?'" he went on, his anxiety allayed.

"When would you like me to?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Talk sense, author!"

"It was a perfectly truthful answer; you asked me when I'd 'like' you to."

"Well, when do you expect me to?"

"Just as soon as Erskine can get somebody else for *Dora*! Will you?" he begged. "Will you send in your notice, and give the stage up for me, darling?"

"After all the pains you took to get me the engagement, wouldn't it be ungrateful to you?"

"Won't this engagement do as well? You're very good as *Dora Villiers*, but I'd much rather see you as my wife."

"May I," she asked, dimpling, "play the new part according to my own ideas, Mr. Hillier?"

"You shall play it however you please, my dearest dear," began Hillier rapturously. And this time the guard nearly caught them.

CHAPTER XIII.

So the "ingénue" of the number two provincial company returned to the Hampstead lodgings, engaged to the author of the piece—and that her mother was gratified goes without saying. She was so highly gratified that she wrote enthusiastically to Jevington Gardens the next morning, thanking her brother-in-law and Bella anew for an invitation that had had such brilliant results.

Her brother-in-law did not hear of the letter, for he had had a relapse, and was lying in a critical condition; but Bella read it, dizzily—and between her perfunctory visits to the sick room, sat staring from the drawing-room window, with locked hands. Dusk grayed the drive, the man servant en-

tered and switched on the lights—and still she sat there, thinking.

Was George truly in love, or had the proposal emanated from pique and spite, from an insane desire to revenge himself? Again and again, she pondered that question. Again and again, she queried whether her influence over him could be regained, were she free. If—her mind thrust the thought aside, only to revert to it, fascinated—if Arthur died? Might—might not she and George come together, after all, supposing that Peggy weren't in the way? And if Arthur lived? She tried to persuade herself that she was hoping he might. Would it not be maddening to see the man she loved married to her niece? In any circumstances, no matter how the illness ended, this engagement was insufferable! To frustrate it, she would go to any lengths, she would say anything!

She replied by telegram, asking Peggy to come to her without fail on the following day, and the girl went in the morning.

"How is he?" she inquired, as they greeted each other. "May I go up to him?"

"He had a bad night; he's asleep now; the nurse just came in to say he wasn't to be disturbed."

She had offered no congratulations in her message, and, after a moment, the fiancée said nervously: "I hope you didn't think the news of the engagement unfeeling at such a time? Of course, I shan't marry while he's so ill."

"I wanted to talk to you about the engagement," said Bella; "that was why I was anxious to see you. Won't you sit down?" She hesitated. "Are you very fond of him, Peggy?"

Peggy nodded mutely, but her smile was eloquent.

Her aunt sighed.

"Why?" said Peggy. Her smile had faded; there was a tremor in the "Why?"

"Didn't it strike you in that ghastly place, Falaiseville, that I was trying to keep you from meeting him any more?"

"To keep me from meeting him?

You mean, when you advised me not to go to the Diadem?"

"Yes."

"No. No, it didn't strike me. Why did you try to keep me from meeting him any more?"

"Did it never strike you that he had anything to do with our leaving Pourville?"

"I don't understand, Aunt Bella," exclaimed the girl harshly. "What is it you're talking about?"

"I was afraid of this happening, dear. I knew it would make you wretched; I wanted to save you."

"To 'save' me?" She got up. "If you've anything worth saying, please say it plainly!"

"Don't take that tone with me, child. I'm speaking for your own good. The man's not worthy of you; you mustn't marry him."

"What have you been told?" she stammered. "Some rumor that he'll deny! Whatever it is, I don't believe it; I know him better than you do!"

"No, I know him far better, Peggy."

"What?"

"I used to be engaged to him."

The girl's voice wouldn't come; her figure swayed a little.

"I threw him over to marry your uncle. I treated him badly; he worshiped me. It's not easy for me to tell you, but it's my duty."

"You're very noble! You threw him over to marry a rich man you didn't love. Well?"

"Oh, I knew how it would hurt you. I can make excuses for what you say."

"I don't ask you to excuse, I ask you to explain. You say you used to be engaged to him, that he—he was very fond of you. It's not pleasant to me to be told these things, but you spoke of 'saving,' not of wounding, me."

"I want to save you from a man who doesn't care for you."

She threw back her head, and laughed, and the laugh stung the woman to fury.

"He doesn't care a snap of his fingers for you; he's humbugging you, making a fool of you for a purpose!"

"The *past* may have been yours, Aunt Bella!"

"You little idiot, he's crazy about me; he told me so in Pourville, he's marrying you to be near *me*?"

"You lie, you beast!" gasped the girl.

They faced each other for a moment speechlessly.

"There's a limit to what I'll stand from you," panted Bella, "remember that! I'm telling you the truth. He made love to me in Pourville. It was the first time I had met him since I married. I told him I'd never see him any more. Then he began to make up to *you*. You can judge how much it meant. You can judge what he proposed to you for."

"I can judge how much to believe a jealous woman!"

"Jealous? Of *you*—the thing he's making use of?"

"The girl he wants to be his wife—who has made him forget a creature that hadn't any shame. I have judged you from the day you sold yourself."

"Take care!"

"What of? You've done your worst. You've slandered the man I love, you've tried to break my heart, you've said things that no decent woman would say to any girl. You're horrible, but you're powerless—there's nothing cruel, or cowardly, or vile, left for you to say!"

But there was no spirit in her mood when she had gone. The streets looked strange, all her world seemed to have altered. Some, at least, of what the woman had said must be true—once he had loved her. And not so long ago! Was it possible he was deceiving himself; if it was a fact that they had met in Pourville for the first time since she jilted him, might not resentment have influenced him unconsciously? Mightn't he, without analyzing the motive, have sought to show how indifferent he had grown?

She didn't want to think these thoughts, but they possessed her mind. She dwelt upon things to prove his devotion to her; but recently he had

been devoted to her aunt. She tried to believe that, if she became his wife, their path, and her aunt's, need never cross; but she knew it wasn't true. She felt hopeless, helpless; the right course and the wrong had lost their signposts; she tottered at the crossroads, confused. If he, indeed, loved her truly, why should she sacrifice her joy, and his, because a girl to whom he was formerly engaged was to-day a connection of hers? But how could she be sure, positive beyond all question, that he loved her truly? And if she convinced herself now, and married him, might not the doubt occur again afterward?

It was only a few hours later that Hillier called on her; it was less than forty-eight hours since they had been engaged. She had asked her mother to let her receive him alone, and her gaze told him what had happened as he entered the room. She put out her hand; she did not kiss him. He dropped the gift that he had brought upon the table, and they looked at each other, without speaking.

Then he said dully: "That woman has been talking to you? You're going to give me a chance, Peggy; you're going to tell me what she said?"

Her voice was as flat as his own. "She said you used to be engaged to her."

"I meant you to know it; I should have told you, myself, very soon. What of it? If it had been any other woman, you wouldn't take it like this. Why take it to heart because it was *she*?"

"She said that you're in love with her still."

"My God! You know better than that!"

"Do I?" she faltered. "Do *you*? Are you *certain of yourself*? That's the whole question, George! Sit down, dear. Don't look as if you were a culprit. I'm not angry; I've nothing against you. We've got to talk it out together like friends!" She repeated to him all that had been said—and the man knew what it was to hate a woman.

"It's a lie!" he cried, again and again. "I swear it!"

"Oh, my dearest," said the girl, "is there any need to tell me that she put it all in the cruelest way? I know it, I know you're not wronging me deliberately. But——"

"There's no 'but.' I love you, and only you!"

"Listen! When you saw her in Pourville, that was the first time you had met since she broke it off?"

He nodded wretchedly.

"Did you know she would be there?"

"Yes," he groaned.

"You went on purpose to see her again? Oh, it sounds as if I were cross-examining you! But I must know everything, dear, for both our sakes!"

"I was a fool, and I didn't know you then."

"Will you answer something honestly, no matter how much the answer hurts us both?"

"I'll answer anything you ask me, from my soul!"

"Did you never think that if you— if you seemed to admire, seemed to like some other girl, it would be 'getting a bit of your own back'?"

"Peggy!"

"Answer, George!"

"I thought so once; it was before I knew you."

Her eyes closed. "Then, what she said was true at the beginning, at all events? You *were* in love with her, you *were* 'humbugging' me at the beginning, George?"

"I wasn't; I've been perfectly sincere with you from the first moment! At the beginning, before I was presented to you, the idea had entered my mind; that's all. And, anyhow, what does the beginning matter now?"

"The beginning was such a little while ago," she said, "such a little while ago. Is your love for her as dead as you think? Oh, at this minute you're furious with her for hurting me, but was the love dead yesterday— will it be dead to-morrow? That's the question that I can't decide, the whole question that must part us."

"What can I do?" cried Hillier des-

perately. "She's no more to me now than the woman across the road, or the woman next door. Why won't you believe it? Can I do more than swear that every thought I have belongs to you?"

"No. You can't do more. That's the pity of it! You can only swear it to me, and to yourself—and neither of us can be quite, quite sure that you aren't wrong."

"Look here," he exclaimed, "put yourself in my place! If there were a vestige of doubt in your mind—if you had a shred of fear that the engagement was a mistake—wouldn't you seize this opportunity to get out of it? Would you beg, as I am begging, to marry a girl that you weren't certain you wanted? Doesn't the fact that I'm imploring you to be my wife while you're asking me to release you, show that my proposal was no impulse? Doesn't it show that I proposed with all my heart, and all my reason, too? If I had told you the story myself, there'd have been no question of our parting; it's the lies you've heard that have confused you; your judgment is in a tangle; it's not fair to either of us that you should come to a decision yet."

"You suppose," said Peggy wearily, "you can say anything to me, or I can say anything to myself that I haven't said already? If I thought for a month, it would be only to think the same thoughts over and over again. Reflection couldn't bring me any nearer to certainty. Perhaps I'm wrong to send you away—if I am, remember that I have to suffer for it, too—but I couldn't marry you with the doubt in my mind. I should be miserable, and make you miserable. We've got to face that, and say 'good-by.'"

"You don't mean that I'm not to see you any more, at all?" he stammered. "If you've 'talked it over as a friend,' why don't you treat me as a friend? Why should I lose you altogether?"

"Because I'm not made of bricks and mortar," she answered. "I couldn't go through this twice."

Though he didn't know it, she began to fear that she couldn't go through it once, as he paced the room, remonstrating, as he seized her in his arms, and pleaded. Then the door closed behind him at last—and Bella had won the first round.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Can't say I agree with you," said Crosbie. "Don't know the lady—and don't suppose she'd like me if we met—but from what you tell me, she seems rather a level-headed young woman. I should take the same point of view, myself, if I were a nice girl."

"Don't you think I know my own mind?" flamed Hillier.

Crosbie smoked critically. "Yes," he conceded, "I think you know it this time—so far as any one can be said ever to know his own mind, the human mind being a storehouse of perpetual surprises—but I've a longer acquaintance with you than Miss Marsden has. What *she* knows is that, a couple of months ago, you thought you were in love with her aunt, and followed her to Pourville."

"It wasn't love, it was curiosity."

"It wasn't love, but you thought it was. Why condemn Miss Marsden for making the same mistake? And, anyhow, you aren't the first man that lost his Paradise through curiosity. You could scarcely expect her to back your stability with her life, all at once."

But Hillier would admit no justification for Peggy's doubt. She had treated him unfairly, he considered; he was wounded in his pride, as well as in his love. Forbidden the district of Hampstead, he found all London meaningless, and the next morning he went to Paris, equipped with a plentiful supply of stationery, and a strenuous resolution to accomplish a play, which had been commissioned, before he came back.

He had never stayed in Paris before for any length of time, and under happier conditions the programme that he devised there would have been very pleasant. To work, in congenial sur-

roundings, on a theme that satisfied him, to take his diversions in the stimulating atmosphere of Paris life, would have banished most minor worries from his mind. But his attachment for Peggy wasn't a minor worry; it was an earnest love that defied the strenuous resolution and paralyzed his pen for weeks. Even when he had compelled himself to write, and persevered with the task for a month, when act first of the play was finished at last, the girl remained insistent and supreme. He reread the act on the morning that it came from the typist's—and tore it into strips. It had been torpid, pulseless, perfunctory. So much for working against the grain! He would hang the play up, and enjoy himself for a spell!

But, strange as it may appear, though he sought diversion with both hands now, Paris was as meaningless as London. The theatres were dreary, and the women were plain. His success provided him with some introductions, and he spoke French well enough to have profited by them, but the celebrities bored him. They all had one fatal defect: They weren't Peggy.

Writers whom he would have been elated to meet a while ago were tedious company to-day, because he craved to be talking to Peggy instead. Actresses whom he used to admire on the stage seemed to him automata in their salons, because his interests were across the Channel, with a gray-eyed girl in Hampstead.

After three months of Paris, he had to confess it a failure, and toward the end of December he returned to Soho, crossing on impulse, and wasting a ticket for a *répétition générale*.

Crosbie was away; he had gone to some relatives in the country for Christmas, Hillier learned, and the rooms looked desolate. When he had unpacked his portmanteaux, he stood at the window, watching the puddles quiver in the lamplight, and questioning whether it was worth while to go out in the rain again to get something to eat.

On reflection, he decided that it

wasn't. He had a chop at home, and read the evening papers, and saw a paragraph to the effect that, owing to the continued popularity of "All the World Wondered," no change of bill was likely to be required at the Diadem for months to come. By and by, it occurred to him that it would kill an hour before he went to bed to stroll round to the Diadem, and have a chat with Erskine, and he went out, after all. But the idea had presented itself late; when he reached the house, the lights of the façade had been extinguished, and as he turned up the passage to the stage door, he half expected to hear that the actor-manager had gone.

"Is Mr. Erskine still in the theatre?" he asked.

The doorkeeper touched his cap. "Good evening, sir. Yes, sir; he's in his room—unless he went by the front."

"I'll see," said Hillier.

The last "set" had been struck, and the curtain raised again. The footlights were out, and only the "T" piece shone between the gloom of the bare stage and the vast obscurity of the auditorium. As he crossed the stage toward the dressing room, an actress, in her hat and coat, was crossing it toward the street. Both faltered, and paused midway.

"You?" she breathed.

"Peggy! What are you doing here?" he stammered.

"I'm playing here now," she said unsteadily. "Miss Forsyth had to be released. She was engaged for the Throne. Mr. Erskine offered me the part. Hadn't you heard?"

"No. I'm glad you're getting on."

"Of course, I owe the chance to you, all the same."

An east wind was creeping across the stage, but neither of them felt it. They stood where they had met, nervous and constrained.

At last, because the silence became too awkward, he said: "I've been away. In Paris. Working—or trying to work."

"Have you?" murmured the girl.

"How are you?"

"All right. And you?"

"All wrong."

"Well, I suppose you're going in to see Mr. Erskine?" she said. And, as she moved, the light of the "T" piece fell upon her figure.

"You're in mourning," exclaimed Hillier. "Oh, my poor girl! Is it—have you lost your mother, Peggy?"

"Why, no," she said, startled. "It's for Uncle Arthur. Didn't you know?"

"Dead?"

"He died three months ago, just after we—just after I saw you."

"So—so your Aunt Bella is a widow?" said Hillier abruptly.

"Mrs. Marsden is a widow. I needn't think of her as my aunt now."

"I suppose not. No, I suppose you won't see her any more."

"We're not likely to visit each other now. I must say good night."

She put out her hand, but he held it fast. "*She's* a widow. And *you* sent me away. I should be free to ask her by and by to marry me. Is that so?"

"That's so," said the girl hoarsely.

"Well, then, I love you! I'm starving for you! All I told you was true, and you haven't the right to doubt a syllable of it any longer. I can't work because of you. I couldn't stay in Paris because of you. I couldn't sit at home to-night when I got back because of you. Thank God, I've met you—and you shan't send me away lonely any more. You're taking every thought of my mind, and giving nothing in return. I've everything but you, and without you I don't feel worth a tossing coin. To-night I mean to feel that I own the earth, and a bit of heaven thrown in. I mean to have your promise to be my wife. I'm going to take you in my arms right here, and you're going to let me do it. Peggy, I want you. I can't stand it without you! Are we engaged?"

In the silent theatre, she raised her face to his; upon the empty stage he held her to his heart.

"May I wish you a merry Christmas, sir, and a very happy New Year?" said the doorkeeper, as they passed.

THE POCKETBOOK

BY JOSEPH C. LINCOLN



WAS loafin' along down the path that leads from the Old Home House to the beach and boat landin' when I heard a hail comin' from somewhere off my star-

board bow.

"Wingate! Hi! Wingate!"

I swung around and there they was, the four of 'em, settin' in what Cap'n Jonadab calls the "rusty harbor," meanin' the two uncomfortable benches made out of birch logs, with the knots and bark on, that Peter T. Brown had set up on the edge of the bluff overlookin' the bay. The "Rustic Arbor," Peter named it, and 'twas a great place for boarders, especially young ones in assorted couples.

But the crowd whose heads I could see stickin' up over the Arbor bushes wan't that kind of assortment, not by no manner of means. There was Ebenezer Dillaway, who runs the New York Consolidated Cash Stores and is Brown's wealthy pa-in-law. And a little, meek-faced boarder man by the name of Ezra T. Smith, who hailed from a place called Peasley, Indiana, and who told everybody that he'd had money left him, and was cultivatin' society. And old Hannibal Boscoe, from Pittsburg, who was so rich that champagne disagreed with him and he could afford to tip the waiters. And Anson Hedgegrave, from Chicago, who was likewise rich, but round and fat and jolly. That was the crew mannin' the "rusty harbor" at that minute, and I wondered what on airth they wanted of me.

I walked up the slope and rounded the bushes. They was settin', two and

two, on the benches, and a table was between 'em with cards on it.

"Mornin', gentlemen," says I, "haivin' a little game, was you? Hope you don't want me to take a hand. All I know is casino and seven-up and I wouldn't swear to them without further evidence."

Hedgegrave laughed. "No," he says, "we've had all the cards we want for the present. Been teachin' Smith here to play poker. He's a promisin' pupil. Ho! Ho!"

Teachin' Smith! Teachin' him! Same as the whale taught Jonah to play hide and hoot! Why, that little green landlubber stood as much show with that gang of pirates as a stray canary on a cat farm. I looked at him, pityin', but, would you believe it, he was all excited and happy.

"It was a new experience for me, Mr. Wingate," he says. "It was, really! I never played cards for money before. Really I never did. I—you will excuse me for bein' personal—but I was rather strictly brought up—raised, that is—and I am only beginnin' to see the world. Yes! I won forty-three dollars. I held four—four somethin's all alike and—"

"You held four jacks, that's what you held," broke in Boscoe, disgusted; "and I was another for goin' up against 'em with three bullets. But never mind that, Wingate. That's off the subject. We want you to get us a pocketbook."

"A pocketbook!" I sings out. "You want me to get you—"

"An empty one, that's all," puts in Hedgegrave, with another laugh. "Is there a shop around here where we could get a good-sized pocketbook? We've been havin' a discussion, and we want to try an experiment."

Well, I thought for a minute and told 'em that I cal'lated if we sent one of the hotel boys up to Cahoon's store at the Centre he would most likely find some sort of a purse. "That is," I says, "provided Cahoon ain't 'all out, but expectin' some in every day," which is one of his habits. How good a pocketbook do you want?"

Didn't make no difference. Any kind would do, so 'twas big and prosperous-lookin'. I was curious enough to find out what they wanted of it, and, after the boy had gone, they told me.

Seems, when the card playin' was over, they'd got into the dickens of an argument concernin' honesty. 'Twas Smith started it, all innocent as usual, but intimatin' that he didn't know's he'd ought to keep his poker winnin's. "Seem's if I hadn't—well, you'll excuse me, gentlemen—I mean as if I hadn't got an honest right to it," he says.

"Bosh!" snorts Boscoe. "Don't talk that way, Smith. This ain't a young people's meetin'. Honest right! I tell you honesty these days means gettin' away with the goods and not bein' caught at it. If the average man sees a chance to get his hands on a dollar he's goin' to do it, and keep 'em there as long as he can; that goes, whether he's a parson or a bartender."

Ebenezer Dillaway he agrees with Boscoe, which is unusual, as them two was rowin' most of the time. "You're dead right," he says. "Look how we have to do in business."

Hedgegrave gives in that there's considerable dishonesty in the world, but some honesty, too—in spots.

"That's very true, sir," puts in Smith. "In my general store at Peasley, Indiana, I had a clerk who was the very soul of honesty. Why, he——"

But nobody paid any attention to him, of course, and Boscoe comes back with more arguments to prove the general and necessary crookedness of everything. Then Hedgegrave says that the rural districts is the place for honesty. In the cities a man is more or less obliged to get ragged in his morals, but in the country the old sterling virtues don't wither so early.

"Oh, nonsense!" hoots Ebenezer. "I wouldn't trust the gang down around here with ten cents, if they saw a chance to steal it safe. Do you mean to tell me, Hedgegrave, that if you lost money around this place you'd expect to have it returned?"

Well, Hedgegrave thought 'twas an even risk that he would, Boscoe and Ebenezer laughed at him and the talk got hotter. Finally Hedgegrave says:

"Look here," he says, "why not try it? Let's risk an experiment. S'pose we put some bills in a pocketbook and leave 'em by that path over yonder. Then we'll watch from here and see who goes down the path. If the pocketbook's gone we'll know who found it, and we can wait and see whether he tries to locate the owner or keeps it and says nothin'. 'Twill be fun, anyway the cat jumps, and the mercy knows we need some excitement these dull days. What do you say?"

They all said yes, of course. That is, all but Smith, and nobody minded what he said. 'Twas enough of a gamble to tickle Dillaway and Boscoe right down to the ground. But when it come to gettin' a pocketbook they was stuck, for a minute. They all had one, of course, but all but Smith's had the owner's name stamped on it. Smith, he hemmed and hawed and finally says he don't know's he'd like to risk his wallet 'cause 'twas give him by his Aunt Emilia, the one that left him the money, and he set considerable store by it. Then 'twas suggested that they buy a new one, and when I happened along they hailed me.

We had to wait quite a spell for the boy to get back from Cahoon's, and while we was waitin' Hedgegrave goes up to the hotel. He didn't stay but a few minutes, and just as he reached the Arbor on his return trip the boy trots in. He'd bought a big, long pocketbook, one of the kind with a strap around the outside.

"Cahoon had a whole dozen of 'em, just alike," he pants. "Brand new and just come by express. They was thirty-five cents apiece, but I didn't s'pose you'd mind the expense."

We didn't, and after he'd gone Hedgegrave reaches into his jacket and fetches up a stack of greenbacks—nice new bills. Says he:

"Boys," he says, "here's a hundred and fifty dollars. That's enough, ain't it?"

Smith's mouth fell open, and I guess mine did, too.

"My dear Mr. Hedgegrave!" says he. "My dear sir! You don't mean to risk one hundred and fifty dollars in such a——"

"Hush up!" snaps Boscoe, irritable. "I guess it's enough, Hedgegrave. No use havin' any less."

"No," says Ebenezer. "They might return a dollar and a half, but one hundred and fifty dollars is a livin' for life in this forsaken neck of the woods. But 'tain't right for you to put up the whole stake, Hedge. Let the rest of us in, won't you?"

No, he wouldn't. Said 'twas his suggestion and he was willin' to take the chance.

"Besides," he goes on, winkin', "I'm bettin' it'll be returned. When a reward's offered, anyhow."

He puts the bills in the new pocketbook, and out we go, the five of us, and drops the thing at the side of the path leadin' to the boat landin'. The place where we dropped it was just out of sight from the Arbor, down the slope a ways, at the edge of a clump of bushes and hid in a little in the grass.

"There!" says Hedgegrave, grinnin'. "I consider that a very workmanlike jog. Nothin' too plain nor yet too much concealed. Layin' just casual and incidental, as if separated from Hetty Green or a head waiter by force of circumstances. Come on! Let us seek our sylvan retreat and pipe the passer-by."

So we hurried back to the Arbor and through. Everybody was excited and eager, but little Smithie was the most of all. He was so tittered up he couldn't set still and his eyes was poppin' behind his specs. This was the real thing! *This* was seein' the world with a vengeance! 'Twas plain enough they didn't

heave money around so in Peasley, Indiana.

"S-sh-sh!" breathes Ebenezer. "Some one's comin'."

We scooched down and kept still. Some one *was* comin', sure enough! For a second we didn't scarcely breathe. Then around the bend swung Zach Simmons, the young feller who was actin' as skipper for the *Rosie*, the catboat old Boscoe had hired for his own special use that summer. Boscoe was a great chap for sailin', and him and Dillaway—who was likewise fond of the same things and owned a catboat named the *Mallard*—raced about every other day. First the *Rosie* would win and then the *Mallard*, and Boscoe and Dillaway was vainglorious or doleful, turn and turn about. Dillaway's skipper was old man Zenas Gill. When the two millionaires wan't quarrelin' over whether the *Mallard* or the *Rosie* was the best sailer they was fightin' out whether Zach or Zenas was the best sailor. Each swore by his own man and at the other feller's.

Well, Zach come swingin' along the path, whistlin' and happy—as he'd ought to be considerin' the wages and tips he got from 'Boscoe—turned the corner and disappears behind the bushes where the pocketbook was. We waited for three minutes longer. Then says Dillaway, quiet and sarcastic:

"Humph! Well, if *that* feller found it you'll have to call in the police, Hedgegrave. *He'll* never give it back of his own accord."

"Is that so?" snarls Boscoe, bristlin' up. "If there is one absolutely honest man in these parts his name is Zachus Simmons. You're in luck, Hedge."

"Gentlemen," puts in Smith, fidgetin', "may I suggest—don't you think we'd better go and see if he did find it?"

He was startin' toward the bushes when I grabbed him by the coat tails. "Hush!" says I, earnest. "Scoosh down again, quick! Here comes somebody else."

We hushed, and when I see who

'twas this time, I pretty nigh laughed out loud. Zach Simmons, Boscoe's skipper and pet, had been the first. Now who should heave in sight but old Zenas Gill, Ebenezer's partic'lar salt-water idol. 'Twas plain enough that, as Hedgegrave had said, whichever way the cat jumped there'd be fun. I could smell brimstone already.

Zenas was moonin' along, rubber boots on his feet, sou'wester on the back of his head, and a pipe in his mouth. He didn't stop a second, but went clodhoppin' down the slope and in behind the bushes. One minute, two, three—then Brother Peasley Ezra Smith couldn't stand it no longer. Out he jumps, nervous and skippy as a sand flea, and races after Zenas. In another jiffy back he comes, wild and stary.

"Gentlemen," he whispers, hoarse, and holdin' up both hands, "it's gone! The pocketbook's gone!"

We run to see for ourselves, but he was right. The new wallet and the one hundred and fifty dollars was gone.

Anson Hedgegrave chuckled.

"So far so—bad," says he. "Now for the Diogenes' honest man hunt!"

Boscoe pulled his whiskers. "Ugh!" he remarks, casual. "Well, Hedge, you've got one chance. If Cap'n Zach picked it up you'll get it just as soon as he can locate the owner. But if that Gill scamp got *his* hands on it, then——"

"Bet you fifty dollars he returns it," put in Ebenezer, quick as a flash.

"Take you!" comes back Hannibal, just as quick. "Just because that mud scow of yours, Dillaway, got advantage of a lucky breeze while our boat was becalmed you let that Gill lobster-back fool you to death. I wouldn't trust his honesty any more'n I would his seamanship. Why——"

"That'll do!" snaps Dillaway, redenin' up. "Hedgegrave, you and Wingate witness this, will you? I'll double my bet. I'll bet a hundred even that if Cap'n Zenas found that book he returns it inside of two days."

"Go you!" roars Boscoe. "And I'll bet the same on Cap'n Zach."

"I—I'll witness it, gentlemen," declares Smith, rubbin' his glasses for joy. "I give you my solemn word that I witness it."

Nobody asked *him* to witness nothin', but they let it go at that.

The two days went by, and two more after it, but not a word came from the finder of that pocketbook. Old Boscoe and Dillaway both declared they'd won the bet, but they couldn't either of 'em prove nothin', of course, so things stood just as it was. 'Twas rainy weather, and the crowd put in their time playin' cards in Boscoe's rooms. Smith told me about it.

"They are most interestin' people, Mr. Wingate," says he. "*Most* interestin'! All men of affairs, men of the world. To be with them is a liberal education."

"Yes," says I, lookin' at him sideways, "I presume likely that's so. But some kinds of education are expensive, they tell me. You been playin' cards with 'em, have you?"

Why, yes, he had. They had been kind enough to teach him more about poker and such games.

"I—I—as I said, Mr. Wingate," he goes on, "I have had little opportunity for such little amusements in my home life in Peasley. My store kept me busy and——"

"How much have you lost so fur?" I interrupts.

"Well," he says, blushin' some, "I am a—a trifle behind the game, Mr. Wingate. I believe I have lost—er—seventy-three dollars and seventy-five cents altogether. But Mr. Boscoe and Mr. Dillaway both assure me I shall have my revenge later on. Luck is bound to change, you know."

"Um—yes, maybe," I says. "Now, Mr. Smith, I don't want you to think I'm interferin' in what ain't none of my affairs, but if I was you I wouldn't chum in with that gang quite so frequent. They're old birds and rich, likewise they're wise in some respects. To beat them you'd have to be born a considerable spell ago and with both eyes wide open. If I was you——"

But, would you b'lieve it, he wouldn't

listen. Got peevish and almost mad. Said he was bein' afforded a chance to get acquainted with the world and society, and he considered himself fortunate. I shut up, of course, but I went in and figgered up how much board he owed the hotel. I didn't mean for the house to charge off too much to the world and society, if I could help it.

On the fifth day Anson Hedgegrave stuck up a notice in the lobby of the Old Home House. It said that such and such a pocketbook—describin' it—had been lost. It contained one hundred and fifty dollars in banknotes, and the finder could have half that sum for returnin' the wallet and the other half to Mr. Barzilla Wingate at his desk in the office.

"There!" says Hedgegrave, grinnin'. "There's a compromise with integrity that ought to fetch results and immediately settle those bets of Boscoe's and Dillaway's. If there is any honesty aboard the *Rosie* or the *Mallard* that ought to shake it down. Hey, Wingate?"

I thought so. Surely the reward was big enough. And, though I wan't bettin' too high on the characters of Zach Simmons or Zenas Gill—knowin' 'em well as I done—I did think that safety alone might 'cause 'em to hand over. But, when that notice had stayed up for most a whole week, nothin' had come of it.

Hannibal Boscoe and old Dillaway was hardly on speakin' terms by now. You see, there wan't any question but that whoever had the pocketbook was a thief. The owner's name wan't given on the notice, but my name was. There was no honest reason for not bringin' the lost article to me immediate. And, 'cordin' to Boscoe's arguin', that proved Gill was the guilty party. Zach Simmons bein' all that was pure and smart and whole-souled—not to mention the fact of his skipperin' Boscoe's boat—showed conclusive that he wouldn't steal. Dillaway figgered the same way, only exactly opposite. Old man Zenas Gill was a saint—and skipper of the *Mallard*—therefore Simmons

was the robber. Ebenezer and Hannibal quarreled and rowed somethin' scandalous. Likewise they changed their bet and raised it. Now, each was layin' three hundred that t'other feller's man had found the pocketbook and was keepin' it.

They played poker whenever it rained daytimes, and by and by they took to playin' in the evenin'. Little Smith was pupil, and Hedgegrave, and Boscoe, and Dillaway teachers. I watched the Indiana man pretty sharp and, when I dared, I asked questions. Seems he was still behind, though not very much. They was just leadin' him on, that was plain, and he was always hopin' for "revenge." He'd get it, right back of the ears, so I cal'lated.

One night the quartette went up to Boscoe's room after supper and, when I turned in at eleven, they was still there. I woke up at three and looked out into the hall. The skylight over Boscoe's door was open, the lamplight was still streamin' out, and I heard Smith sayin':

"Well, gentlemen, I—I think I will venture ten dollars."

"Raise you a hundred," says Dillaway.

I went back to bed groanin'. Here was where Indiana got its, I jedged.

Sure and sartin! Early that mornin', when I was in the office afore breakfast, down comes Smithie. He looked, so it seemed to me, pretty toler'ble sick.

"I—I have decided to go, Mr. Wingate," he stammers. "Please have me and my trunk taken to the early train at—at once. I don't think I care for any breakfast."

I looked at him.

"Go?" I says. "You goin' now? I thought you was intendin' to stay for a month more at least. Tired of the world and society already?"

He smiled, pretty feeble. I went back to the desk and got his bill. I'd kept it made out, right up to the minute. I'd been expecting casualties.

"I—I hope the—the charges are not excessive," he says. "I—hope not."

"There they are," I told him

He took the bill, looked at it, and groaned, sort of to himself. I pitied the poor thing and my conscience got a holt of me.

"Mr Smith," I says, "we'll knock ten dollars off that, for friendship's sakes."

He thanked me hearty, took some bills out of the purse his "Aunt Emilia" had give him, and paid up. I fetched a sigh, bein' relieved in my mind. The depot bus come to door and he got in.

"Shall I tell Mr. Boscoe and the rest good-by for you?" I asks.

"If you'll be so kind," says he. "Please—er—thank them. They have—er—made it very pleasant for me here. And"—he tried to smile again—"and no doubt I have profited by their acquaintance."

"Yes," I says, "maybe it has been profitable—in a way of speakin'. Now, Mr. Smith," I went on, "you head straight for Indiana and stay there. It's a fine State for—for vegetation and such—I hear, and you'll do well, I'm sartin. Good-by and better luck next time!"

After breakfast Hedgegrave come into the office. I was just goin' to tell him of Smith's fadin' so sudden, when somethin' happened that made me forget all about it, for the time.

In walks Zach Simmons, lookin' pretty average sheepish and sort of nervous.

"Mr. Wingate," he says, "can I speak to you a minute?"

"Guess so," says I. "Heave ahead and speak."

He hesitated, and looked at Hedgegrave, and hemmed and hawed, but at last he out with what was on his mind.

"You lost a pocketbook, didn't you?" he asks.

"One's been lost," I answers, settin' up and takin' notice. "Why?"

"What kind of a one was it?" says he.

"It's all told about on that notice in the hall," I says. "You've read it often enough, for I've seen you."

"Is that it?" says he.

Hedgegrave and I pounced on the

wallet like hawks droppin' in at a pullet sociable. We undid the strap and laid it open on the counter. Hedgegrave counted the money inside; one hundred and fifty dollars in bills.

Zach watched us, anxious.

"You lost it on the path to the shore, there by the beach-plum bushes, didn't you?" he asks.

"Gosh!" I sings out. And then: "What have you been keepin' it for all this time?"

"I don't know's that's any of your business," begins Simmons, ugly.

I might have said more, but in walks Ebenezer Dillaway.

"Ha!" says he. "What? You've found it?"

"Looks like it," says I.

Hedgegrave didn't answer at all. He was turning over the banknotes.

"He found it," chuckles Ebenezer, p'intin' toward Zach. "I thought so. He! He! He! I knew it! That's a good one on Han Boscoe!"

"Look here!" says Simmons. "I b'lieve the one that fetches that pocket-book into this here office gets half of what's in it, don't he?"

"Guess he does," laughs Dillaway. "That's the agreement, wasn't it, Anson?"

Hedgegrave looked at him kind of queer.

"You want me to pay him, do you?" he says to Dillaway.

"I want you to?" repeats Ebenezer. "I want you to? Why—why, what do you mean by that? You agreed to pay half of—"

"I know," says Hedgegrave. "Only I wanted it understood by all hands. He gets seventy-five and I keep the rest. Is that agreeable?"

"Agreeable to me, all right," says I. "Tain't my money that's been risked on the fool deal."

"Course it's agreeable," snaps Dillaway. "What are you draggin' us into it for?"

Hedgegrave counts out seventy-five dollars and passes it to Simmons. "There!" says he. "Who says virtue is its own reward? Take your cash, honest man, and trot along."

Zach grabbed the seventy-five and trotted. He seemed to be anxious to go. Dillaway commenced to laugh again.

"Honest man!" he sneers. "Honest enough to hang on until the reward was offered! Wonder what Boscoe'll think of his prayer-meetin' sailin' master now? Guess I win my bet! He—— Hello, cap'n! What do you want?"

'Twas Zenas Gill he was speakin' to. Zach Simmons hadn't no more'n got out of the office than Gill walked into it. He stood there, wringin' his sou'-wester in his hands as if 'twas soakin' wet and shiftin' from one foot to t'other.

"Er—er—Mr. Wingate," says he, lookin' from me to Ebenezer and back again. "I'd kind of like to—to speak with you alone a minute."

"What for?" I asks, laughin'. "You ain't found any pocketbook, have you?"

He jumped and stared.

"Why—why, yes I have!" he stutters. "I have found one. That's what I come here for. You lost a wallet with a hundred and fifty dollars in it down on the shore path, they tell me. I——"

"What in thunder?" burst out Dillaway.

Hedgegrave waved him to be still.

"Well, cap'n," says he, "what of it?"

"And the feller that fetched it here was to get half, wan't he?" goes on Zenas.

"Yes."

The old man dove down under the hatches of his coat and comes up with a pocketbook the dead image of the one Zach had just turnt over.

"Is that it?" he asks.

You could have blowed me down with a fan. But Anson Hedgegrave was calm as a church.

"Looks like it," says he. "Is the hundred and fifty inside?"

Ebenezer went up in the air.

"You—you——" he hollers, fairly prancin' fandangoes in front of his pet skipper. "What do you mean by this? Who put you up to this game? Don't

you know the pocketbook's been found already?"

"Found?" roars Zenas. "What——"

And then I'm blessed if Hannibal Boscoe, from Pittsburg, Pa., didn't "drop into our midst," as the *Weekly Item* would say. Hannibal was grin-nin' triumphant.

"Ah, ha!" says he. "The lost is found, hey? And the sainted and spir-itual Gill is the angel who's been hang-in' onto it. Well, I ain't surprised. Ebenezer, guess you owe me three hun-dred."

"I do, do I?" screams Dillaway. "Well, I——"

"Steady on!" cuts in Hedgegrave. "Yes, Cap'n Gill, there's a hundred and fifty in your pick-up. Shall I give this man half of it, Boscoe?"

"Deed you won't!" snorts Ebenezer. "Not if I have anything to say."

"You haven't. You said yours about Cap'n Simmons' find. Shall I pay him and keep the rest, Hannibal?"

"What do you ask me for?" snaps Boscoe. "Pay him? Sure! Why not?"

"All right! I'm satisfied if the rest are. There, Saint Zenas, take the re-sults of your honest toil and depart. Ho! Ho! Ho! This is *too* rich!"

Down he flops in a chair and hol-lers and laughs. As for Zenas, he froze onto his seventy-five and run. Dillaway glared at Boscoe and shook his fist.

"It's a fraud!" he sings out. "A put-up job! You're a swindler, sir!"

I thought there would be a sure-enough rumpus, and I was gettin' ready to hop in as peacemaker. But Hedge-grave got ahead of me.

"Hold on, boys!" he says, chokin', and tears runnin' down his fat cheeks, he'd laughed so hard. "Don't rough-house, please. Let's get down to tacks. Here," he goes on, takin' it from inside his coat, "is a pocketbook, identical with the one we baited the shore path with a while ago. It contained one hundred and fifty dollars, but now con-tains seventy-five, the remainder hav-in' been presented to the person who conveyed it here ten minutes ago—

namely, Cap'n Zaccheus Simmons of the catboat *Rosie*."

"*What?*" whooped Boscoe, his eyes bulgin'.

"Ah, ha!" crowed Dillaway.

"And," pursues Hedgegrave, "here is another pocketbook, also identical, and likewise havin' contained one hundred and fifty produced three minutes ago by Cap'n Zenas Gill of the *Mallard*. Cap'n Zenas also has received his reward. Havin' paid out one hundred and fifty, all accordin' to promise and by general agreement, I now have left one hundred and fifty, which, also accordin' to general and mutual agreement, I keep in my possession. Cast your bread on the waters and it doubles up. Ho! Ho! Ho!"

Boscoe walked straight acrost the room and p'inted his finger at Ebenezer's nose.

"You call *me* a swindler!" he gurgles, red as a danger lantern on a railroad. "*You* do? *You!* I'll tell you what you are, sir! You're a fake. You went up to that Cahoon store and bought a pocketbook exactly like the one Hedgegrave dropped in the path, and you put a hundred and fifty of your own money in it. And you bribed my man Simmons—an honest man before *you* tackled him—to pretend he found it. He was to get the seventy-five and you was to have the laugh on me and win my three hundred. That's what *you* did! Don't you *dare* deny it, you—you impostor! By George, I—"

"Impostor, am I?" squeals Dillaway. "*I* an impostor! What are you? Do you dare deny that that is exactly what *you* did? Corruptin' my cap'n and—"

"Good land!" I broke in, gettin' my voice at last. "Don't make so much noise, gentlemen, please. The boarders'll all be in here if you do. Can't we settle this thing peaceable? *One* of them pocketbooks must be the right one."

Hedgegrave, who'd had another laughin' fit, sobered up and waved his arms.

"S-sh-sh!" says he. "This is no

riot. As Wingate says, blessed are the peacemakers. As to the right pocketbook—well, I don't know. But as to the banknotes, that's different. Boys, you may remember that I went back to the hotel to get the money I put in the original pocketbook. Well, before I returned to our little gatherin' in the summer house, I marked every one of those notes."

"Marked 'em?" says Boscoe.

"Um-hm! Marked 'em so I could tell 'em again. I don't know why I did it. Certainly I didn't expect any such circus as this. Ho! Ho! But I did mark 'em. Now here's Cap'n Zach's find—no marks on them. And here's Cap'n Zenas' treasure trove—also no marks. Far be it from me to say whose money this *was*, but it now appears to be mine, unless the rightful owner—or owners—desire to put in a claim."

There wan't no claims put in. Ebenezer and Hannibal both glared at each other, but that was all.

"Then," says I, "this is more mixed up than ever. Who—what—why—how'd you mark your bills, Mr. Hedgegrave?"

"With a little circle of ink down on the lower right-hand corner of each note," he says.

"Hey?" says I. "A circle?"

"Yes. And inside that circle I put—"

"Not a little *cross*?" I yelled.

He whirled on me. "A little cross is right," he says. "But, for heaven's sake, how—"

I didn't answer. I just got out of my chair, went around to the safe, and unlocked the cash drawer. I was so dazed and kind of numb in my head that I cracked my shins two or three times, but it didn't hurt—then. I reached into the cash drawer, took out two tens, two fives, and three two-dollar bills, and brought 'em back to Hedgegrave. I didn't say nothin'—I couldn't—but I laid them bills in his lap.

"By Jove!" says he. "These are some of them. There's my mark on

each. But, Wingate, where in the world did they come from?"

I got out my handkerchief and swabbed my forehead.

"Mr. Smith left this mornin'," I says, faintlike.

"Smith?" says Hedgegrave.

"Smith?" repeats Boscoe. "Left? Do you mean to say he's gone for good?"

"I mean that Ezra T. Smith, of Peasley, Indiana, left this hotel and this town this mornin' on the depot wagon and early train. He sent his good-bys to you gentlemen and paid his board account with them bills there."

The three looked at me and then at each other. I looked at them.

"Smith!" says Dillaway.

"Smith!" says Boscoe.

"SMITH!" says Hedgegrave. "By—the—great—hornspoon! Why—why, fellers, he—he was the one who went and found the pocketbook was *gone*!"

"Smith!" says Dillaway again. "And we thought he was so blessed green!"

"We were teachin' him poker," wails Boscoe. "And—and he won over nine hundred on that big jackpot last night, the one where I had three fives, and Dillaway the straight, and you, Hedge, the two pair, aces up. He opened on three tens and got a pair of sixes in the

draw, you remember. I thought it was beginner's luck—*Smith*! well, by George!"

"That jackpot happened on his deal," says Hedgegrave, dreamy.

"And this very mornin'," says I, by way of layin' a final wreath on the coffin, "I knocked ten dollars off his bill 'cause I felt so sorry for him!"

The Hedgegrave man stood up straight. "Gentlemen," says he, "I propose that we, the guileless and trustin' representatives of the farmin' boroughs of Chicago, New York, and Pittsburg, adjourn to the closet under the stairs where Wingate keeps his no-license refreshment and pour a libation to that flourishin', up-to-date, and cosmopolitan metropolis, Peasley, Indiana."

Cap'n Jonadab was away visitin' his folks in Connecticut while this was goin' on. When he got back I told him about it.

"Humph!" he says, pretty dubious. "'Twas sort of funny the way it turned out, but it's a hopeless yarn, just the same. Maybe *you* can find a moral in it, but I can't."

"Course you can't," says I, "and that's the comfortin' part of it. If any one of the gang had *had* any morals 'twouldn't have happened."



THE BURDEN

THE burden that I bear would be no less
Should I cry out against it; though I fill
The weary day with sound of my distress
It were my burden still.

The burden that I bear may be no more,
For all I bear it silently and stay
Sometimes to laugh and listen at a door
Where joy keeps holiday.

I ask no more save only this may be—
On life's long road, where many comrades fare,
One shall not guess, though he keep step with me,
The burden that I bear.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

The EAGLE'S FEATHER



By EMILY POST

CHAPTER XIV.



GRADUALLY, insidiously, a change came over Piotrovski. He spent longer and longer times in his study, apparently working hard. Yet despair seemed brooding in his face; he became silent, aloof, moody, but Vera's presence, instead of soothing, aggravated his symptoms. Sometimes he looked at her, for the space of a whole week, vaguely, unseeingly, as though he were not in the world with her, as though his very soul had left his body, and gone wandering off into the moon spaces by itself. When she spoke to him he answered mere words, as a parrot might, words that she felt had not the slightest meaning to him. Then days went by in which she scarcely saw him. He got up at sunrise, and shut himself in his study. Food was put on a tray at the door in chafing dishes and thermos pitchers. He took it in when he felt like it. In the afternoon, he walked alone; he forgot to kiss her; he seemed to forget her entirely. Yet to others, who occasionally dropped in, he talked as though he were wound up.

In the meantime, she had the rare intelligence and the still rarer self-control never to ask questions, never to break in upon his moods. What this self-control cost her probably no man could understand. But since he did not care to speak of whatever it was that troubled him, she tried not to let herself think of it. "What he wants

me to know he will tell me," was her attitude.

The walls of her part of the house were thick and had double doors, so that she could safely practice without danger of his hearing. Her only fear was that she might disturb, or "break in," as he put it. Her every thought and prayer was that whatever was on his mind would develop into something to his own credit, and so, in her own sitting room, busy over occupations deliberately sought, she waited for him. She missed him always—every hour, every moment—but she thought she understood his almost cataleptic state of preoccupation; he had told her once that when he was "in a mood," he was like a chip carried on the flood of a great tide, that when he was absorbed in a piece of work those who were nearest to him most interrupted. It was one ray of comfort that to Verney he was as irritable and aloof as to her.

She saw that Verney was much troubled, and she therefore tried to reassure him by pretending that she noticed no change in Jan. She was also hiding, so far as she was able—even from herself—her first realization of loneliness. Loneliness was a factor that had not entered into her calculations; it was a feeling that she had never in her life before experienced, a feeling that she had never before been able to appreciate. She had time and time again stayed in the country—on her own, not her brother's, estate—seeing no one for half a year. She had not realized that solitude through voluntary choice was a very different thing

from her present enforced solitude. At any moment she could have packed up and gone a few miles away, to her brother's, or to Vienna, or to Paris, where scores of houses stood wide open to receive her.

But now, in Paris, filled with people who had been lifelong friends, driving past houses gay and full of life, yet closed and dead to her, she felt loneliness in its most poignant form. Even in the friendship of her few good friends, there was a barrier, a constraint in their intercourse that made sympathy difficult. Her life and theirs differed too widely. Every piece of news they had to tell was of the world from which she was ostracised. The salon, the races, even the opera—to all of these she no longer went; she couldn't go where every box was filled with eyes to be avoided. Once or twice she had gone with Jan to the première of some play. His life was connected with the theatre, and in a stage *baïgnoire* she was able to sit so turned that she did not have to face the house. But there was inevitable humiliation at every point of contact with people; humiliation to which she in no way grew callous. And above all there was increasing, day by day, the appalling, unconquerable loneliness that must be confessed to no one.

The Princess Mitzka wrote her often, and affectionately as always, but her letters were strained in the poor lady's effort to avoid painful subjects, and it was just as impossible for Vera to write her aunt with any degree of naturalness. She wrote occasionally in her journal, which she had always kept at great length; but she had little inclination now for self-expression. Her moods were above and below the journal strata of conscious outpouring. The sight of children playing—especially very little ones with bobbing yellow curls—caught her heart with sudden twinges. Also certain flower odors, certain nursery tunes, certain dishes cooked in a certain way, all brought distress that every outcast feels in facing vivid reminders of home. But these were not feelings to harp on and

elaborate in the pages of a journal; they were feelings to slip away from as quickly as possible.

And these were not all: Far down in her inner consciousness there was yet another source of unhappiness, and it was the deepest of all. This, too, was something for which she was not prepared since she had never imagined its possibility. The separation from her brother was a sacrifice that she had since the beginning accustomed herself to face, but so far as relationship to the church was concerned, she had felt herself able to say her prayers without the medium of a priest; ritual was a thing that she thought she could do without—even peacefully.

And yet, now there was growing in her soul, growing, growing—a great and deepening sense of loss—a longing that would not be stilled, a pain that gnawed incessantly. Once, in passing the Cathedral of Notre Dame, she had obeyed the impulse to enter. The beggars at the doors accepted her alms with the same blessings showered for all benefactions, and she passed from the sunlight into the incense-laden sombreness of the church. Quietly she moved down the aisle and knelt on one of the innumerable little praying benches. But no sooner had her lips formed her first "Ave" than, with a sense of suffocation, like a guilty thing, she started to her feet. Why this ominous sensation, as though an actual presence had bade her go! Assuredly she might kneel and say her prayers; no one would interfere. Startled, she saw the old verger coming down the aisle, but he did not cast her a look.

Realizing her emotions to be the result of mere nerves, she went slowly up the aisle again and instinctively approached the font. Was not the holy water for all who craved its balm? Would any withhold from her its privilege? Her fingers from habit made the motion forward—and then drew back. The first realization in its fullness of what excommunication meant swept over her, blighting her very soul. In an agony of desolation, she seemed incapable of moving, thinking, breath-

ing. The confessionals, with their little open doorways, were barred to her with rods of flame; the font of holy water into which each passing beggar might dip his hand might not be polluted by the touch of such as she. She fled from the sanctuary an outcast, and the deep wound of this experience was one that could never heal.

All this, too, was not to be written in a journal, nor spoken of, nor even thought of, if heart and mind could be controlled by will.

Meanwhile, there was some one who was anxiously watching Vera, apprehensively watching Piotrovski—Verney. The poor good giant! He thought himself far too dull to cope with the intricacies of Vera's feelings; he realized that he had no knowledge of women—women, that is, of the great world. The little grisettes he fancied that he knew well enough, but he had an idea that women of fashion had a different set of emotions from their sisters of the studios and the streets. He had wondered from the first whether it were possible for a woman of her tastes not to feel the opprobrium of the position into which she had put herself too much to be happy in any event. What must her suffering be now that Jan was "in a mood!" It did not seem possible to him that any woman—the more in love she was, the harder it would be—could understand and tranquilly accept his apparent indifference.

One thing was certain—she ought not to be left so much alone. In that matter, at least, he could help. For, although he knew that no one in any way made up for Jan's absence, he knew, too, her enthusiasm for achievement and her unflinching readiness to help. So Verney had clay carted into the garden behind the summerhouse, and after persuading her that she was exactly the model he at that moment needed, he began the statue of her which was exhibited at the Salon in 1906—the one of her sitting on a low bench, her head raised a little, as though she were just for a moment looking up from her sewing.

It was at this time also that Bluet—upon being encouraged by Verney to join them—painted his portrait of her. In fact, her garden became, gradually, quite an atelier. Rachette made two etchings of her. And Little Smith began every day a fresh portrait, destroying each attempt almost as soon as it was begun; but daubing without distress over his failure, quite frankly and with glee, like a small boy who begs a piece of dough from the cook and joyfully mixes and bakes.

And Verney found his stratagem successful, for in spite of Piotrovski's frequent absence, these days in the garden were not unhappy to Vera. Eugene de Marsin's shortcomings—the little false school he founded which had caused her so much chagrin—were quite forgotten. To have Verney, the greatest living sculptor, stand before her, pushing his thumbs into a lump of meaningless wax that was miraculously becoming the likeness of her own throat; to have Bluet painting, and Rachette making a dry point at the same time, all made a wonderful reality—to which Little Smith's failures contributed only a delightful comedy touch, and left her free to weave day dreams of ambition for Jan.

In the meantime, in his own breast, Jan's two natures were lining up for combat. For months the great tragedy of "Ysulinde" had seemed to fade out of his mind, or to recede far into the background, while the foreground was occupied by Vera and love. Then, gradually, irrepressibly, as the tide comes in louder and nearer, with ever rising force came the demand of the unfinished creation for its completion.

The horrible phase of it was that he knew exactly how the tragedy could be completed. The likeness between *Ysulinde* and Vera was so vivid as to seem fatality. In *Ysulinde* he had drawn the character of Vera. Under the same circumstances—not even allowing for a difference in centuries, for from the first Vera had seemed as much a person of the Middle Ages as of to-day—the two women, *Ysulinde* of his brain, Vera of his heart, were the

same. Vera's selfless devotion to him was identical with *Ysulinde's* devotion to the gambler. Should Vera, therefore, be made to undergo the same suffering.

He sprang up, his forehead cold and moist at the thought, but determinedly as he put it from him, it came back. He tried to bring himself to talk it over with Vera, to tell her the plot and get her to advise him, but, strangely, he could not. At the very point where she could have helped, his tongue faltered and he could not go on. She thought he had not yet developed the theme in his mind. She had no idea that it was crowding his faculties so that there was room for nothing else.

One day he locked himself in his study and began the tragedy at the beginning. Reading it over carefully and slowly, the mastery of it gained upon him. The first scenes were better than he had thought. As far as his own judgment went, it seemed a real and worthy performance. The spirit of the Middle Ages he had caught perfectly. The despicable weakness of the husband, the gambling knight, was vividly drawn, the wife, like a second *Griselda* in her faithfulness, was very convincing in the early scenes. There was a splendid opportunity for *La Gioconde*, should she play the rôle of *Ysulinde*.

Piotrovski went over the development of this character carefully. In the first act, *Ysulinde*, in answer to her husband's entreaty, and because of his solemn oath that he would never throw dice again, had donned the costume of a page and gone on the Crusade with him. She had passed as a boy without question until, on an embassy to *Saladin*, in the second act, the Eastern monarch divined, by her shrinking from his sudden glance, that she was a woman. At first his curiosity was aroused, then his interest, and, finally, on being sure of her sex, his passion. There were strong and well-sustained scenes in the third act vital with her indignant repulsion of his advances, her fear of being discovered by the whole camp, her anxiety lest the honor of her lord should be endangered through her; but,

above all, her horror at the touch of any man save her husband, whom, in spite of all, she adored with a devotion that was fanatical. All through the play it was made evident that in her eyes he was the chivalrous Christian knight, *Saladin* the heathen pursuer of her honor.

As far as the fourth act, the play was finished; but the last and culminating act was but roughly blocked. The principal scene is that in which the husband tells *Ysulinde* that he has again been gambling with *Saladin*; then gradually the climax is reached in his confession that, having lost more than he could pay, he has, at *Saladin's* instigation, staked and lost herself, his wife—to square his debt of honor!

To draw *Ysulinde* under those circumstances was beyond Piotrovski, and on this one imperfection the whole play fell—this play which was to be the one true crowning glory of a succession of achievements that had, in his own valuation, been baubles of little worth. One way lay open to him, fiendish and unthinkable. He went out of his study and locked the door, went in search of Vera, and for three days never left her side.

She, knowing nothing of the rack upon which his soul was stretched, at first took the moments of his return as they came, and was happy. But her happiness was not long; her sympathy with him was such that she felt his inward struggling without knowing what it was or why, until one day in a mood less brave than usual she clung to him. He was alarmed at her vehemence; it was unlike her in any way to yield to an hysterical impulse or to be nervous.

"Darling, what is it?"

"I don't know, myself." She tried to speak lightly; but there was unsteadiness in her voice. "It is stupid to listen to what people say, and usually I don't mind. But I wish every one would stop talking to me of shadows. Continually, as he models, Paul keeps saying to Bluet: 'Where does that foreboding, shadowing of her eyes begin? Is it color or modeling?' Bluet said to me yesterday: 'I should like to paint

you laughing'; and Paul answered: 'Humph! Do you think you could any better paint her smile? Neither marble nor canvas will take the life that is in her smile, or the mystery of her eyes.' The effect on me is cumulative, I suppose—it's making me nervous. I am beginning to feel something impending."

The foreboding in his own heart made him doubly tender, and in his tenderness her own apprehensions vanished.

For a week he was attentive; then he grew more moody and detached than ever. Then he threw himself with a kind of furious zeal into the discussion of topics of interest; but something was all out of balance. He grew perceptibly thinner, and the strain under which he labored was evident—though Verney alone divined what it was.

Again and again the diabolical suggestion entered his mind: Should Vera be hurt as *Ysulinde* was hurt, he would behold the tragedy not in the vague picturing of his fancy, but in the life before him. There was only one way to hurt her mortally—that was through himself. He knew that she loved him every whit as much as *Ysulinde* had loved her husband. "Without you, though my body might go on breathing, moving—how should I even know? I should have ceased to exist." And these were not mere words that a woman in a moment of ardor had uttered, and in imagination had felt; she had proved their truth. For love of him she had given up her greatest possession, her honor, her reputation. Beautiful and pure as her own soul might still be, in the eyes of the world she was lost. With an oath he clapped his hands over his ears as though to shut out the thoughts that tempted him. But, even so, they hammered away upon the inside of his skull. In a frenzy of horror of himself, he rushed, a seeming madman, into the room where she sat sewing, and like a whirlwind threw himself upon his knees beside her, burying his face upon her breast.

"But, dear, what is it?" he heard her say; he felt her heart beating rapidly in its alarm, reiterating to him the depth and strength of her devotion.

The thought but tormented him further. "My good, my sweet," he burst out, "I—I don't know what is the matter with me. I get this way sometimes—don't mind, it is always like this when I can't get an idea that I want. Then some day it comes, and I am all right again. Don't notice it—please. Don't mind!"

"There is only one thing that I could ever mind—you know that."

She held him in her arms as though to soothe him. In spite of his will he shook. She thought he had a chill.

"You are not well, dear—that is it."

"No, I am not well—that is it." He repeated the words after her meaninglessly. Then: "Vera!"

"Yes?"

"Read to me. Read to me the dullest, driest, hardest book to understand that you can find. And *make* me explain, as you go along, what it means. Don't"—he shivered again—"don't read me anything with emotions."

She thought she understood. She did in part—but not the part which, had she but known it, was like an explosive ready to ignite beneath her feet.

CHAPTER XV.

Piotrovski tried his utmost to still that horrible inner prompting to turn Vera's love into material for his uncompleted tragedy. But the impulse would come upon him unawares, obtruding in the very middle of a sentence, and so bewildering his mind that he was unable to finish what he was saying. It seized him as the craving for drugs seizes a victim addicted to their use; until he felt that he must obey the craving or go mad.

One day, when the impulse had been more than ever insistent, when he was almost at the end of his power to resist, he left his desk suddenly and stood before the portrait of Vera, which Bluet had just finished. He studied it, searched it, and a realization of the liv-

ing woman's rare quality swept over his tortured mind. And his love for her pushed the demon of his genius—not into the background, but to a place where for a moment, the two forces as it were, stood side by side. If only she might show him the way without herself suffering, if only the suffering might fall on him alone! Why couldn't he, who understood her every thought and shade of feeling, go farther, and know how she would act and look and feel in *Ysulinde's* place? He stretched his arms above his head, then passionately covered his face with his hands.

"Ah, God!" he prayed. "Is all the little mind that Thou hast given me to lead to this? To feel what might be in my power to do, yet never to accomplish it!" The cold sweat stood out on his forehead, and he threw himself on his knees before the portrait with his hands clasped, and cried aloud: "Vera, Vera! Oh, God, let me not be tempted!"

Vera, though she could not realize the true situation, knew, of course, that he was not himself. He did all sorts of unaccountable things—forgot to go to bed, forgot to eat, or asked again for the meal he had just finished. Several times she saw him wandering hatless, coatless, and in thin pumps, out in the garden in the snow. At last, thoroughly alarmed, she insisted upon taking him south. A week later, they were in Nice. The warmth and sunshine seemed to do him good, he was much more calm, much nearer normal, and the unacknowledged apprehension, which had crept upon her in spite of her faith in him, that he might be growing tired of her was quiet. Never had he been more tender to her, more appreciative of her, or seemed more dependent upon her.

At the hotel where they stopped was a group of fashionable people whom she had known intimately. It gave Piotrovski poignant pain to see her walk by them with her small head held proudly, as though she were unconscious of them. And the contemptuous curiosity of their glances brought home to him more vividly than anything had yet done, the sacrifice she had made

for him. He never let her know that he had noticed this group, or that he thought them other than total strangers. But he managed, under the lash of regret he felt for her, to banish all other thoughts from his mind and to devote himself wholly to her.

Vera was seemingly unconscious of her anomalous position, but, unknown to any one, there were innumerable times when she felt it painfully. Long generations of fineness meant a sensitiveness that made it exceedingly difficult to face these people who no longer knew her. She had no feeling of resentment against them, and so far as they were concerned, she felt no regret for what she had done. This part of the price she was paying was no harder in actuality than it had been in theory. Yet it gave her a feeling of distress—a curious feeling in which pride and shame were so intermingled that she could not distinguish between them. But there was only one thing that caused her real unhappiness—now that Jan was himself again—and that was his lack of productivity. The season was drawing on, his manager wanted a new play, and the play was not forthcoming.

Vera had given up her name, her honor, not for love alone, but because through her, and through their love for each other, she had hoped his work might acquire new vitality. He had been a poet of the moonshadows, a poet of ideas, not of the blazing noon-day sun, and not of feeling. She had realized the great lack in his work, and had believed her love might help to supply it. In some ways her hopes for him had been fulfilled. The poems that he had written under her influence were filled with sunshine, but all that he had gained in emotional feeling he had lost in energy. His mind seemed like a softly running stream that leaves scarcely a ripple. He needed steeper descents and jagged rocks in the course to quicken the current and strengthen its force.

Vera began to realize that great effort was never the result of contentment, and needed too often the incen-

tive of stern necessity or of pain. Had she gone away in the beginning—as soon as he had declared his love for her—it might have been the best incentive he could have had; and the torturing thought came, and persisted, that the intimacy of their life had perhaps hindered the development of those very qualities in him which she had wanted to inspire. A strange thing was that, as he never really told her of "Ysulinde," from the little she knew, she thought it a play that he had not found worth finishing. He had many such.

They returned to Paris about the middle of February. No sooner were they at home than he became more moody than ever, and insidiously the suspicion grew in Vera's mind that he must be tired of her. Again, as in all moments of such doubt, his confession in the summerhouse echoed in her memory. Vividly his words came to mind: "I feel and care, for the time being—and then suddenly my mind grows restless and has to break away. I have crippled every one that has depended upon me, I have broken the heart of every one that has loved me!" And again doubt haunted her that it might all have been best had they never been more than friends. Jan was very sensitive—must he not feel a loss of bloom in a relationship that was condemned by the world, forbidden by the church? Could wrong, therefore, ever be right? No matter how pure her motive had been, there was a tarnish.

Had it been real, or had she imagined the hardness of expression in his eyes and on his lips that several times lately had hurt her so? Could it be that Jan felt a lack of respect for her, that, to spare her feelings, he was not willing she should ever know, but that she had surprised in his unconsciously telltale face? Could it be that she had dragged his eagle wings down; that, unhampered by her, he would have soared higher? These thoughts tormented her ceaselessly, relentlessly.

Besides, she felt gradually more and

more keenly the inexorable loneliness of the outcast. She never went out Sunday mornings—it hurt too much to pass the churches, to see the communicants going to mass. She tried never to think of the Szapary children, yet she found constant and harassing reminders of them. Driving one day through the Rue St. Honoré, she saw a lovely dress for a young girl. She stopped the carriage to buy it for Doricha, before she remembered. For a moment, even then, she pondered upon a way to get it for her. The idea occurred to her of sending it through her aunt, the Princess Mitzka, but her aunt had not been in Paris, and they would all know whom it was from.

This small circumstance was only one among many that hurt unexpectedly and continually. So long as she had felt no doubt that Jan needed her, her devotion to him, her happiness with him, had counteracted the yearning for her brother and the children. But with Jan's aloofness, the loss of her family was hard to bear. Worst of all was the doubt—had she been wrong? Wrong not alone in the step itself, but in her judgment? The payment for something real, something that counted for good, would have been little; but the payment for a false step was a misery too great for endurance. As she drove away from the shop and its dress that had tempted her buying it for Doricha, the inevitable helplessness of her situation brought the actual sound of a sob to her lips.

To distract her thoughts, she drove to the Louvre. She went through the hall of the Greek marbles, but they did not appeal to her. They were all too human, too voluptuous; even the Winged Victory, floating down over the wide stairway, jarred on her feelings, with the flaunting triumph in each flying swirl of drapery. She was not in the humor for the exultant pulsing spirit of the Greeks. The paintings might be better suited to her mood. But when she stood before them, the effect was even worse. There was no answer for her doubt; there was not a story in all the canvases that was par-

allel with her own. A number of them represented saints or sinners. The sinners, most of them, becoming saintly through renunciation. She had through renunciation become a sinner. Those who mourned children were mothers. She mourned children who were not even her own.

She turned from the galleries and was going toward the stairway when suddenly Olga Tarsoff, her niece Doricha's greatest friend, ran gladly toward her. In her own eagerness she almost forgot; then her position came crushingly to mind, and she turned abruptly away, but not until she had caught the look of surprise and hurt in the young girl's face at what must have seemed a rebuff direct. With the blood beating in her temples, Vera hurried to lose herself in the crowd and so escape.

This encounter was by far the most painful she had experienced. It was easy enough to avoid people who wanted themselves to avoid her. But this was the first case where the avoidance had been all on her side. It was evident that Olga had not been told about her. The incident made her feel farther beyond the pale than anything ever had done—except once when the Szaparys were in Paris, and she could not see them. At that time only her anxiety that Jan should not know what the separation from her brother and the children cost her, kept her from giving way to illness. The meeting with Olga, now, coming after her distress at not daring to send Doricha the dress, made the day cruelly hard, and she returned home as though physically bruised.

On the hall table was a letter from the Princess Mitzka. Even ordinarily she read her aunt's letters with an eagerness not unalloyed by pain; but to-day she dreaded doubly to break the seal. So much so that she put the letter in her muff and went toward the door of Jan's study. It was closed. Half absently, she moved nearer until she stood close to it, laying her head against the panel. Silently, though, so that she might not be heard.

In her doubt and loneliness she felt

such a need of a look, of a word that would show *his* need of her, that the impulse to open the door was almost uncontrollable. Through the paneling she heard no sound. Then at last a sheet of paper turned. He was working—she could not break in. She left the door quietly, with little steps, that her skirts might make no sound, and sat down upon the staircase to read her letter. She tried to feel some small comfort in the fact that Jan was not actually far away—even though the door was shut. And for a while she sat there quite still; her letter in her hands, her hands in her muff. She looked at the closed door, and in imagination through it, where he, doubtless, was bending over his desk. Finally she roused herself and took the letter out of her muff.

Thinking of the Szapary children and then meeting Doricha's friend had unnerved her so that she could scarcely face reading the simple details that the princess was wont to write of the children. She half shivered as she broke the seal. Her heart beat irregularly as she bent back the fold of the first page. Suddenly her face grew ashen. Her fingers trembled as the words she read gripped and tore at her heart. The letters blurred and jumped, as the lines started, seemingly, from the paper:

Tanya is very ill. Last night she was unconscious. That has passed, but she is delirious and cries all the time for Auntie Vera. You took care of her when she was ill before and she remembers.

Vera's head went down into her hands, the crumpled paper crushed against her eyes. "My little Tanya—my precious—my little lamb—and I can't go to her! I can't go to her!"

How long she sat on the stairs she never knew—a minute, an hour. Her first consciousness was that she was again standing at the door of Jan's study. She had never interrupted him before, but this time, into the haven of his love and sympathy she must go or lose her reason. She turned the handle of the door quickly and entered almost running—her hands stretched out to

him, the appeal of her heart's agony in her eyes, in her face—its every line and feature drawn in an overwhelming grief. "Oh, Jan!"

The short syllables froze on her lips. He was craning forward looking at her as though fascinated, but as though he had never before seen her. Then suddenly, as though stricken with insanity, his eyes glittering and steely cold, his face exultantly cruel, his lips almost smiling, breathlessly, ecstatically he whispered four syllables: "*Ysulinde!*"

For hours and hours Piotrovski had been struggling in the grip of his awful temptation, fighting that strange force within himself which threatened to overpower him. At the end of a day's exhausting endeavor he began to reread in an agony of despair his latest failure to write the culminating scene of the tragedy. He was revising his futile manuscript at the point of the climax in *Ysulinde's* betrayal, and so deeply immersed in his tragedy that he did not hear Vera enter. Her long dress brushed the carpet as she hurried toward him, and Piotrovski suddenly looked up.

In his obsession he did not see the living woman. The tension of his mind was so great that the ordinary workings of sense and reason were suspended. Vera did not exist for him. He, Jan the man, was dominated and put aside by Piotrovski, the genius. In the moment of fresh failure, he, the genius, had heard a sound, and turning, had been confronted with—not Vera, but *Ysulinde!* There, living, breathing, before him, his eyes beheld the tortured look of *Ysulinde* wounded to the depths of heart and soul. Fiendishly the genius in control demanded the full value of the moment, he must keep the torture on the face before him that it might be watched and noted and seized. He was not Jan Piotrovski; she was not Vera, the woman he loved; he was merely an instrument through which a creative force demanded fulfillment; she was—*Ysulinde*.

He had no more consciousness of

self than has a hypnotic subject. Without a sign of agitation he told her—watching the effect upon her, with that glitter of madness in his eyes—he told her coolly, distinctly, each word cutting with staccato sharpness, that he was tired of her; that he did not really love her, that, in fact, she had been but a fleeting fancy, and their relationship a degradation that had grown abhorrent. He wanted to end it all then and there. Would she please have the goodness to pack up and go?

In the silence that followed, not a vestige of consciousness either of himself or of her returned. Like some one dying of a thirst, he drank in each inarticulate syllable of her utterance, each slightly varying shade of her expression; each movement of her very eyelashes was stylographed with minute exactness upon the tablets of his brain; even the seconds between her faltering breaths were mechanically counted.

All this time he himself felt nothing personal. He was no one. She was no one. He saw only *Ysulinde*—wronged, outraged, betrayed, wounded to the core of her great soul, living, breathing before him, while, like instruments of uncanny mechanism, his eyes, his ears, telegraphed every minute detail to his parched brain. As though she were *Ysulinde* making her exit in the last line of his drama, he saw Vera disappearing through the door.

Just at that point, something that belonged to the feelings of a man whose name was Jan faintly cried out that there was taking place, between this small human portion of himself and the being most dear to him on earth, a separation that meant forever. But the faint voice was unheeded. "Forever" was a word of seven letters; otherwise it had no meaning. His every faculty was obsessed by the climax of the tragedy which had been enacted before him; the curtain of the living drama had descended, and Piotrovski, the genius, the dramatist, swung around to his desk, grasped his pen like a madman. And like a madman he wrote.

Dusk turned to darkness, early even-

ing to black night. The fire burned gradually lower. A storm came up, and sleet and snow hit against the panes and piled up in the frames of the windows. A vivid color patched Piotrovski's cheekbones, while the impatient black characters covered the paper before him.

Finally the storm ceased, the hectic flush turned gradually to pallor, the swift pen strokes grew more slow, more labored, but without once ceasing their continuous march across the paper. The fire burned so low that the last embers struggled weakly against the enveloping ash. Dawn broke faintly purple. The first pale gold shaft of morning came in through the window and illumined the written page.

The tragedy was finished. Its purpose accomplished, the genius in him subsided, and Jan fell into a transition stage of partial return to himself. Only partial—tears of anxiety and fear, the result of the long intense nervous strain, came into his eyes as he took up the pages he scarcely dared to read. His strength was so far spent that he could hardly translate his hieroglyphics into meaning words, but as he read, gradually the wonder grew.

So marvelously had he succeeded that a new vitality swept through his exhausted body. He could have shouted in exultant joy. Never in his highest flight of imagination had he hoped for such a result. The words, the metre, the construction, and dramatic climax were nearly faultless, and every line was breathing, pulsing with life. *Ysulinde* was living! *Ysulinde* was living at last! He gathered the pages up in his arms in a transport of ecstasy, the blood coursed to his finger tips and tingled back again. His heart throbbed, his head swam, he almost sobbed. It was done, the tragedy, even as he had prayed it might be—it was done!

Clutching the manuscript to his heart, he staggered to his feet, took a few steps unsteadily, and then rushed upstairs, shouting: "Vera!"

"Vera!" He burst open the door of her room. And then crushingly, in the midst of his triumph, dawned the mem-

ory—the hideous memory of the price at which he had bought it.

"No, no, no, it isn't true! It isn't true! Vera! Vera!"

As though, in his frenzy, it were the one word he knew, he rushed through her rooms calling: "Vera! Vera!"

But there was no sign of her. Her bed had not been slept in, but her things, all in order, gave no evidence of packing. Terror-stricken, still distractedly calling her name, he searched for her as though she might be hidden; through her rooms and through his; out into the garden and back again; until his increasing agony of voice brought the servants undressed and running. They found him in a state indescribable.

"Find her! Find her!" had now become his cry. "Search Paris; drag the Seine! Find her! She has gone! Find her!"

Force of habit took him unconsciously back into his study. His left hand still gripped the manuscript. As though to taste the last grain of bitterness, he turned the leaves again. A moment's strangely vivid clearness of mind revealed, even in the few lines he reread, that there was no mistake; this could without doubt be ranked as a really great piece of work. With a sob that broke from the depths of his soul, he stirred up the last embers, and threw the tragedy upon them.

Then he fell prostrate before the hearth.

CHAPTER XVI.

It is hardly necessary to speak further of Piotrovski's great play, "*Ysulinde*." There is no modern tragedienne of note who has not essayed its leading rôle, no lover of poetry who has not read it, many times—even in the translations which necessarily restrict the flexibility of Piotrovski's French and rob it greatly of its beauty. On the night of its production—on the night to which Piotrovski had always looked forward, when Paris should be given the "something worthy

of her"—no radiant poet made his bow before the public, with the satisfaction in the thought that the applause was at last deserved. The five inseparables were in their accustomed stage box, but to them this great, culminating, deserved success was as tragic as the play itself; for their friend Piotrovski was a wanderer upon the face of the earth.

A number of persons know now, of course, what no one knew then, that, had it not been for Paul Verney, the tragedy would have been lost. Upon the morning of Vera's disappearance, the servants ran for him, and he came just in time to rescue the charring manuscript from the slow flames to which the poet, in his grief and remorse, had consigned it. Luckily, the pages had been crushed so tightly together that it was only some of the outer sheets, and those by happy chance of the earlier part, that had burned—a part that Verney's accurate and retentive memory was fortunately able to supply. He thereupon took charge of the manuscript, and later handed it over to Donay, the manager. Piotrovski refused to have anything to do with its production. He never wanted to hear it mentioned, and he never was able, even years after, to speak of it with self-control.

On that same memorable morning, Verney, after gathering up the manuscript, also gathered up in his arms Piotrovski, who had fainted, carried him upstairs, and put him to bed. The doctors and Verney thought he was surely going to have brain fever, but it proved to be a collapse from physical strain, as well as mental; and enforced rest under bromides brought him around, so far as any danger of serious mental derangement was concerned. But his only conscious thought was to find Vera. His one reiteration: "Is she dead! Oh, Paul! Tell me the truth!"

Meanwhile, no stone was left unturned to find her; but she had left no trace. Piotrovski's one hope that she was alive lay in the fact that no news had come of her death. He read

the papers with passionate fear; he haunted the hospitals—even the morgue. He went to all the towns in which there were convents, questioning the authorities, and every one else as well. He went to the Szapary estates in Hungary, where he found that the Princess Mitzka was as worried and anxious as he. In his distraction he went to the length of forcing himself upon the Count Szapary, who, even in the face of Piotrovski's grief, answered coldly that his sister, the Duchesse de Marsin, had been dead to him for over a year. It was evident she was not there. The sorrow over his lost love was as nothing compared with the anguish caused by his treachery to that love. Had she died before the fateful day, he would have been broken-hearted; but he would not have been a wanderer, crippled in mind and spirit. To add irony to the situation Piotrovski's wife died.

Finally, the middle of the following autumn, he found himself irresistibly drawn to the scene of their greatest happiness, Sicily. But the place was filled with suggestion of her. Every vista and tree and rock vivified in his memory her look, her smile, her touch, and intensified his sorrow and self-reproach to an unendurable degree. It was all too harrowing—he could not stand it; he made up his mind to leave again at once within an hour or two after he arrived. A short distance ahead of him he caught sight of Teobaldo, the young boatman they had employed. Piotrovski tried to escape unrecognized, but the boy ran to him with joy, crying:

"Ah, God be praised, the signora has come! The poor signora—it cannot be long—it is good the signora has come at last!"

"The signora!" To an ear more keen than a Sicilian peasant's, the blurted exclamation would have revealed Piotrovski's astonishment. But Jan had wit enough to recover himself promptly. "I am going to her at once!" he said, with what calmness he could muster. The quaver in his voice might easily be accounted for by anxiety.

alone. "How do you get to her rooms? I did not get the direction aright!"

"The last door to the right, signore, on the second floor. She no longer goes out, signore. The end is very near. Sister Maria Annunziata keeps me always ready to go for Padre Filippo and the archbishop, though the padre comes every day to see her. And the archbishop comes often, as well."

Teobaldo had looked toward the little hotel where they had once stayed, and Jan had no doubt of its being the right one. It was strange that she should have chosen as her haven the one spot where Piotrovski could not bring himself even to go. Then he remembered that she had come to this little hotel ever since her childhood. The suggestions, therefore, were not wholly of him. These thoughts ran through his mind as he hurried on to the hotel, with what self-possession he might. The old *portier*, who had known Vera since a child, and who recognized him as her husband, showed his resentment clearly that he had delayed his coming so long, by almost barring his ingress. But Jan's drawn face softened the man's anger; he opened the door wide and motioned to the staircase.

"The last door on the right?" Piotrovski asked unsteadily.

The *portier*, now somewhat sympathetic, nodded, and Piotrovski went up. At the door he paused, his heart beating so that the door frame seemed made of waving rings. She would refuse to see him, should she be told it was he. His only hope was to take her by surprise. He knocked, therefore, but turned the handle—and entered!

He saw only sunlight, and in its midst Vera! She was propped in a deep wicker chair surrounded by pillows, so fragile, so changed, that, choking, he threw himself at her feet. He expected no better than to have her shrink from him in horror. He cringed in expectation of hearing hatred in her dear voice, as she ordered him from the room. But none of these things he dreaded happened. She

started, to be sure, with her hands pressed suddenly to her heart, and her breath coming with great effort. She was evidently very ill. He saw the black-robed form of Sister Maria Annunziata, the nursing sister, moving forward to interfere; but Vera must have given an order, for the figure moved away, and Jan heard a door gently close. Then he felt Vera's hand upon his bent head.

"Vera! Vera!" He spoke from a throat strangling with pain. Humbly he looked up into her eyes. The look of hurt that he had last seen in them, the look that had followed his every conscious movement since their terrible parting, was gone. In her calm expression there was no trace of hate, or anger, or even of pain. She looked at him with kindness, compassion, but also with an utterly impersonal aloofness.

She spoke in the short staccato breath of very sick persons, but with great sweetness of tone: "I knew you must have suffered. I am so sorry—for you."

"Vera, oh, Vera; could you—can you—ever forgive?"

She smiled a wan, shadowy smile, as though the old brilliance had been caught and reflected in a moonbeam. There was a long pause; then she said slowly: "Yes. I forgive!"

With a cry of wonder and joy, Jan would have taken her in his arms; but, though she did not make the slightest move in protest, there was that in her expression which checked his impulse, and his hands fell limply to his sides.

"Yet you forgive," he stammered.

Her eyes grew moist. Again she put her hand on his head, then stroked his hair, but her touch seemed the soft touch of a spirit.

"I forgive you, yes. I have read 'Ysulinde.' It was no more the fault of you than of me—it was your genius that ruled us both."

"But, Vera; I implore you, listen! To speak of reparation would be only added wrong—but all these months without you I have thought and thought, trying to see things from your side;

trying to understand what our life was to you. And I want you to know that, although no word was ever said by you, I realize that the irregularity of our union hurt you through—the very depth of you—not only in relation to the world, but in your own soul. It would be no false sacrament now; the one who bore my name is dead. Ah, Vera, you will let me make you my wife now—won't you?—before the law and before the church?"

She did not answer, and, even in looking at him, she seemed to be looking through and beyond him.

At last she shook her head.

"You won't? Yet you say you forgive! I know you cannot forgive me——"

"Hush!"

"But why? Oh, dear love, *why?*"

"First, it is too late. I have only days—to live. Perhaps only hours—don't grieve—I am ready! I have made my peace. But even if I had a long life before me I could not marry you. Don't you see—I could—not. Our life was wrong—Jan. We took our life together, took it defiantly of law and said the while: 'See what we are doing!' Can we now go back to holy church and say: 'Had we but waited thou wouldst have given us the gift we took—so here it is back; forget our theft and give it to us honorably!'"

She looked at him, her face tender with pity; but to him it was worse than anger, for in its very sweetness was the finality of one who has passed through the crucible of earthly fire.

"Don't you see?" she said in her soft, half-breathed tone. "To love as we did is ended; to love less would be punishment worse, far worse, than this. Love such as we had was possible only through its perfectness. I do not reproach, but it is gone. Like the perfume of a flower, like the sound of music."

A fit of coughing racked her and he realized what her malady was.

The Sister Maria Annunziata came in and gave her a teaspoonful of something out of a glass at her side. When

she was calm, she motioned the sister to leave them. In a few minutes she began to talk again.

"I want now to speak of you, Jan." She spoke with effort, but she evidently wanted to say what lay on her heart: "Love is not the greater part of you—your genius is first. It is quite as it should be—as I would, myself, have it be. It is your genius that I worshiped first of all, and it is your genius that demanded payment. I want you to know I understand that it demanded payment of you, as well as of me."

Suddenly she had another violent attack of coughing, in which she went into a collapse. Jan jumped to his feet, and called the sister from the next room.

"I am her husband," he said.

The sister looked at him calmly, impersonally, but allowed him to help lift her and lay her on the bed. When Vera came to herself a while later, the sister had left the room, and Jan was sitting close by her. She put out her hand and touched his cheek. It was wet.

"Don't!" she said. "To those who have lived, it is not sad to die. Do you remember—I have thought it so often what I said to you of the skylark, that lived as no other skylark ever lived? I, too, shall live for centuries; though in reality I shall live only a very little while. No, dear; don't grieve. Life has been far too good to us. We must have pain, in order to know fully that which has been sweet. I have had less pain than I deserve, and many and many memories have been left that are sweet. All my life I wanted to help, to be an incentive to greatness. And I have been. Through my little human heart was created one of the greatest tragedies ever written. And I know also—it was not true what you said—for always, always I had your love."

"You had—and have—then, now, and forever!"

Again the merest shadow of her brilliant smile came back, but she was growing perceptibly weaker; her eyes

closed; her breath seemed a mere flutter. The sister came in and went out again. Vera opened her eyes.

"Jan!"

"Yes, dear one."

"I loved—you—very much."

With an added pang he heard the past tense. "From now on, my every moment shall be devoted to you—my wife! We will go to St. Moritz. You will soon be yourself again. Love *must* make you well!" It was a cry of despair from his heart, for he knew she was dying.

"I am quite—quite well now! Jan, dear, listen—you must write on, and on, and on! Beautiful—wonderful—poems, and, remember—if it seems hard—no great thing—was ever—accomplished—except through—pain."

"Vera; oh, Vera!" He broke down completely. "What can I do? What can I do? I can't bear it!"

In answer to his cry of distress, the protective tenderness came back momentarily into her eyes. It was as though her faithful spirit answered to the voice that had ruled her heart; and yet it was as though but a small part of herself were present, and the greater part were far beyond his reach. Her soul was as far away as his mind had ever been in its most aloof mood. She was as sweet, as patient, as lovingly forgiving as it was possible for woman to be—but he realized that his loss of her was absolute. He who had possessed every fibre of her being, could seize and hold only the outer surface of her consciousness. Her lips parted twice, she whispered half unconsciously. He bent to catch the broken syllables, but they were not meant for him; they were fragments of the prayers of the rosary. She opened her eyes again—but she looked at him unseeingly.

Then, as though to rob him even of these last moments, the door opened

and Sister Maria Annunziata came in, followed by the venerable Archbishop of Vencata and a priest. They lighted the blessed candles on a table by the bed. The archbishop put a crucifix in her hands. The priest and sister knelt at one side of the bed, Jan dropped on his knees at the other. Dipping his thumb in the holy oil, the archbishop administered extreme unction to her eyes—her eyes, that seemed to Jan always to have been gazing into the infinite—wiping away with the holy oil all her sins of vision; to her ears, which had hearkened to no evil; to her nostrils; to her lips, which in all her life had uttered only truth and kindness; to her hands, which had been raised against no man, but ever held out to help; and to her heart—Jan felt his own shattering.

Through the administration of the solemn rites, her fingers touched the crucifix, and, as though the very contact gave her renewed strength, she spoke her devout "Amen" almost clearly. Prayers not said for years came to Jan's lips, and were his soul's acknowledgment that a stronger force even than love had taken her from him at the last. Before him like a gray plain stretched long years of life, of work, of giving himself to that force which had made, and wrecked, him and her.

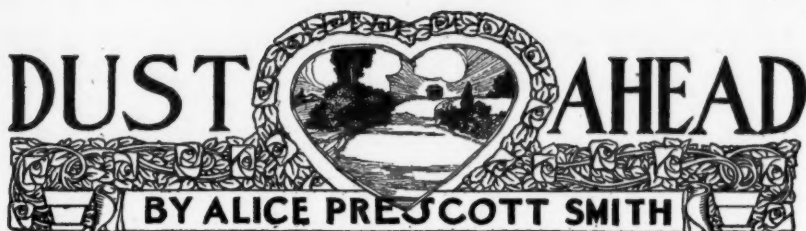
He looked up dry-eyed, dry-throated, racked in every nerve and muscle. And as he looked, suddenly there came into her face an unforgettable peace and sweetness, an expression almost of rapture—and for the last time her lips opened to speak. Jan strained in every fibre to hear. Scarcely articulate were breathed her dying words: "Father Who art in Heaven—hallowed be Thy name!"

Like the faint hushing of wings, her breath stopped.

THE END.



DUST AHEAD



BY ALICE PRESCOTT SMITH



I AM forty, I am unmarried, I am shapeless of form, and dull of complexion. All this condemns me to be a looker-on at life, and has given me sharp eyes. Yet no one was slower than I in seeing that Walter Gifford wished to marry Isabel.

I lived with Isabel. She would have said that we lived together, but that was not true, for it was her purse that made our flat possible. This was hard on my pride only when I had a restless night or on the first of the month when the bills came in. The rest of the time she was able to convince me that she needed me. And perhaps she did. She was too young a widow to live alone, or to take liberties with her hours and her entertaining. And with me everything was possible. Not that I was so many years older than Isabel, but her face was as vivid with life as mine was flabby with resignation. She would never be old, and I had never been young. Yet our minds were alike, and Isabel never seemed conscious of the heaviness of my body. We were happy together.

And our flat was a happy one. People came when we asked them, and our dinners were gay. Isabel had the social sense, and though her life with Frank Gray had sapped it, it would not die. Frank had been pretentious and heavy-witted, but he had liked people, and had expected his wife to bring them to him. So she had done double duty with wit and tongue, and made their house somewhat a centre. It had hurt me often to see her buoy him through a

long evening, though she did it always in a way that saved his pride. I saw her age under it. Yet it was not an unhappy marriage, only a negative one, and if there had been children it might have worked into a fairly successful union. As it was, it was a makeshift, and when the shock of Frank's death had passed I saw Isabel grow larger-eyed, and more girlish, and begin to look around at life. It was then that I joined her. We tried Europe for a year, but San Francisco called us back, and then came the flat, and the friends, and the modestly gay little round of living.

I am talking all around Mr. Gifford, for it is difficult to bring him in; almost as difficult as to understand why he came into our lives or why he stayed when once there. For he was different. He was a man of middle age who had made his money—and he had made a great deal—by hard knocks and hard methods. There were whispers about his business ways, and I had heard him called unscrupulous, but he was successful, and there was little said. He was a member of the solid clubs, and was rated as a man to put on directors. Socially, he should have belonged to the weighty, wealthy set of settled habits, routine dinners, and ponderous middle age.

When he began quietly courting invitations from our circle, we were as sorry for him as for ourselves. For we were an erratic, talk-loving set, devoted to fads and fallacies, late hours and whims. Some of us were poor, some rich, but we all had a certain agility of mind and conviction, if not of wit. Then those of us who had money had

inherited it, and had had leisure to develop conversation and hobbies. Gifford's absence of small talk made him seem dull, which his business career proved that he was not. But why should he put himself at a disadvantage? We openly asked ourselves what he was after.

When we had to admit at last that Isabel was his quarry, we were again befogged. He so obviously needed another sort of wife, and there were so many to be had of the appropriate type. I could have picked one out for him at any large reception. And I should have picked with care, too, giving him the flower of a certain species, for no one from waiter to speculator would have thought of offering Walter Gifford anything second-rate. But I should have selected a Parisian goddess rather than a pixie. It was absurd that he should covet a woman like Isabel, who talked in dots and dashes.

And what did Isabel think of him? I was not sure.

"Doesn't he bore you?" I ventured one day.

She looked out from under the veils she was tying.

"Mr. Gifford bore me?" she pondered. "How can a man bore me who never talks to me?" Still, I had set her to thinking, for in a moment she spoke again. "We are seeing a good deal of Mr. Gifford, aren't we?" She spoke with a little frown. "Oh, well, he'll soon drift away."

I drew a long breath. Obviously, he hadn't touched her consciousness; he wasn't even background.

He must have realized the same thing, and at about the same time. We were his guests that day in his new motor car, and, as usual, he sat like a rock while we frothed around him. There was a touch of annoyance in his manner as he left that night; an air that suggested that, if we only knew it, he found us quite as tiresome as we did him. I thought that we had seen the last of him.

And for two weeks he vanished. I noticed it and counted the days, for the man troubled me, but I saw that Isabel

did not even know that he was not there.

At the end of two weeks, he again asked us to motor with him. I saw, as he came into the house, that he was leaner, and browner, and that he had his office manner.

"Miss Fox"—he turned to me—"you will sit in the tonneau with these two gentlemen. Mrs. Gray will sit in front with me. I am going to run the car myself."

There was protest at that, and inquiries for the chauffeur.

"I've left him at home," Gifford answered immovably. "I intend to drive the car myself. I'll show you."

He stepped into the driver's seat, and did show us. He showed us a respectable motor car gone mad, driven by a quiet-eyed maniac in business tweeds. Our flat was plastered with concrete against a steep, cobble-paved hill, and hung there to mock at gravity. Gifford dashed up and down in front of us till nurse maids pulled their perambulators into basements, and windows were slammed open on both sides of the street.

"We'll go, we'll go!" we chorused. Isabel and I would have mounted Elijah's chariot at that moment to get Gifford around the corner out of sight and comment.

But one of the men still demurred. "How long have you been running this car, Gifford?"

Gifford looked at him. "Get in," he said. "I've been running the car two weeks, but I've been well over the State in that time. I understand it. I wouldn't take this company with me"—he made us a grave, stiff little bow—"till there was absolutely no risk. You will take the front seat, Mrs. Gray."

Of course she took it. But I thought that she looked grave, and a little disappointed. Jack Hunter was with us, and she had been showing him some favor. As for Gifford, I did not see that he spoke to her all the afternoon, except to ask her to sound the horn for him, or to help him watch the road. But he kept the dust robes well around her, and if the machine jarred, the hand

that he was not using in steering went out to steady her. When we reached home, I asked her if she were tired.

"No," she said, and the monosyllable sounded like Gifford's. Then she shook herself together, and looked at me. "It's curious," she said slowly. "It's curious how the motion of the machine gets hold of you if you sit quietly and don't talk."

I can't think of the weeks that followed without feeling breathless. We lived on wheels. Day after day the *Bumble Bee*, as Isabel called Gifford's car, hummed to our door, and we swept off into a world of rushing winds and swimming landscape. There were always others with us, and we were never consulted as to plans. The arrangements for us were ready-made, carved out, perfected, so that it was difficult to resist. But I am not sure that we tried resistance. Motors were new in those days, and rides were a rarity to most of us. Then, too, it was summer, and the town deserted, so there was no tangle of conflicting engagements. There is something almost impersonal in the courtesy of a motor party if the host runs his own car and is absorbed in his engine. We came to think of ourselves as ballast, and there was no burden of obligation in the air.

But one rule was never changed. Isabel sat in front. "I feel safer with her there," Gifford said when we protested. "She can see dust ahead farther than any of you. I depend on her to watch the road."

Somehow we took the explanation simply. We were on mountain roads where dust ahead meant danger. When one travels sharp curves on a five-foot shelf hung over vacancy, there is need of clairvoyance and the gift of listening. And Isabel could see around curves like a small boy or a cat, and could sit mute as a pointer dog. We accepted the situation.

So the *Bumble Bee* buzzed through the weeks. We hummed through hot valleys, where the air was heavy with the wine smell of the fruit, and whirled heavily through mountains. But always we went, and went, and went,

careless of life, tires, engines, carburetors, and other ills. Gifford had been lavish with his money when he bought the *Bumble Bee*, and he handled her superbly, with care for every breath she gave. Then, too, I think she was taken in pieces every night so that every bolt and mystery of her was tested, and admonished, and cajoled into absolutely unprecedented reliability and good behavior.

"A perfect woman, nobly planned," Jack Hunter would say as he patted her engine. "I don't wonder you've married her, Gifford. She's never given you a throw-down."

Jack was a little caustic and dull those days. He went with us often, but all he saw of Isabel was her dust-coated back and a swirl of green veiling. Her eyes were on the road ahead.

In time Isabel's back began to fascinate my own look. She caught the motion of the machine so that she swayed as it did, as if she were a modernized centaur on great rubber-tired wheels. Of course, the front seat rides smoother than the tonneau, but even that didn't explain how when we were shaking around like unrelated atoms in a dice box, Isabel could rise and fall with the rhythm of machinery. To be sure there was always that hand of Gifford's waiting to steady her, but she didn't need it. "Little sister of the engine," Hunter used to call her, and I know that she read a meaning into every breath and wheeze of the car.

Now and then I could hear Gifford give her some low-toned order, and she would handle brake or lever or battery plug for him. That was the sum of their conversation, unless one or the other of them would laugh softly, and murmur: "Didn't she do that nicely!" when the *Bumble Bee* turned a right angle, or poked her nose into the air, taking some perfectly impossible grade. But though they didn't talk, their bodies, eyes, and hands worked together, and as for their brains—well, it was one brain; Isabel's, Gifford's, and the *Bumble Bee's*. It was just one great composite thinking apparatus, with no object but to get on through space.

We wore it out after a time—we in the tonneau—and began most Biblically to make excuse. Life was beginning again in town, and we wanted to be part of it. But we found we had no minds left for our share of the game. We would come in at night soaked with wind and stupidity, and sleep like debauchees. A row of dolls would have been as valuable, socially.

But Isabel didn't seem to notice. She was changing, losing her vivacity. She was happy—I couldn't but acknowledge that—but her mind was no longer a humming bird taking flights where we couldn't follow. It lumbered along the highroad with the rest of us. It was as if her wits had caught the long roll of the motor, and couldn't take cross-cuts. And she was forgetting to talk. I spoke to her finally.

"I like mollusks at dinner," I said desperately, "but I like them to eat—not to look at." I had to be crude and cruel. I had rather she stopped loving me than have her lose her charm.

She only smiled at me. That was one of her new phases—to act as if speech were not worth while. In the old days the retort would have been hot to her tongue, and, remembering that, I ventured further.

"You're with Mr. Gifford so much you're forgetting how to put words together. You should talk to him more, just to keep in practice."

Still she didn't answer, and she dropped her chin in her palm. For a moment I thought I had hurt her, but she suddenly looked up.

"Kate," she said, and her tone was slow and puzzled as a child's, "Kate, he doesn't want to talk to me. I don't think he likes it—this talk of mine." And she laughed a little, still in a puzzled way, and walked out of the room. I didn't follow. I had a great deal to think of, and nothing to say.

Three days after that we were coming back from the Santa Cruz Mountains. It had been a day of mad speed, of rolling curves, and level dashes. But at the moment we were homeward bound, and going slowly. A herd of loose horses came into the road ahead

of us, and the *Bumble Bee* slowed down to a cautious purr.

"Come on," the man who was driving the herd called out. "It's all right. Come on."

We slid up among the horses, and they swerved to the left. We had almost passed them when a great-limbed young mare had a sudden panic. She wheeled, faced the engine, reared, dashed at the car, then reared again. I heard her body brush the front mud guard, and I saw her hoofs over Isabel's head. They were there. I saw them. I think I shall always see them—two brown, steel-shod disks coming straight at Isabel through a curiously blue sky. The *Bumble Bee* swerved till her wheels jammed at right angles. It was over. Isabel was unhurt. The horses scrambled away. Nothing had happened.

The engine gave a dying jerk, and the car stopped. No one said anything. Gifford did not look at Isabel. He leaned back in the driver's seat. The long end of Isabel's green veil was lying free, and he seized it, and crushed it against his face, still not looking at her.

"My God!" he said. "My God! My God! My God!"

It was terrible in its openness. Up to that moment the man had never let eyes or voice betray him as regarded Isabel. He had kept his guard so completely I had come to think him cold.

No one spoke. It was hideous for all of us. And it seemed five minutes before Gifford took that veil away. Perhaps it was. At any rate, the horses were out of sight in a haze of dust. He laid the veil back on Isabel's lap without a word, and looked over his shoulder.

"Crank the car," he said to Jack Hunter, and we started home.

I doubt if twenty words were said by any of us till the car stopped at our door. Gifford had not looked at Isabel, but when she was ready to step from the car, he was in front of her. He didn't offer his hand, but held up his arms to lift her down. And when I saw his face, I suddenly remembered

that this was Walter Gifford, called the shrewdest, hardest financier in San Francisco. We had been taking him very much as a matter of course.

I knew that Isabel did not sleep that night, for I saw a light under her door. I expected her to meet me at breakfast with a proposition that we go somewhere—anywhere—from San Diego to Maine. But she said nothing of the sort. She talked a good deal, and mentioned clubs, people, winter frocks. After breakfast she muffled the telephone. Then she stayed at home all day making a great many plans for the winter. She called Jack Hunter in to tea, but if she wanted him as a bodyguard it was a useless precaution. We saw nothing of Gifford; he did not even send flowers.

The next day Isabel left early, lunched downtown, and came home late in the afternoon attended by a flock of girls. It was a young and obvious thing to do, and I knew that Gifford thought so when he came in and found her among the chatter and the tea things. She talked like a canary, and the girls made a twittering chorus. Gifford sat geometrically in the centre of the group, listened, and drank three swallows of tea. He looked critical. As he was leaving, he spoke to me.

"Miss Fox, do you use tissue paper or cotton batting to stuff your telephone bell?"

"Blotting paper," I answered. He seldom spoke to me, and his manner always left me breathless, and off my guard.

But I was disappointed in Isabel. I wished that she had run away. I didn't wonder that she wrenched the padding out of the telephone, or that she went to bed without dinner.

I looked toward breakfast with misgiving, for I knew that Isabel was in a corner, and would have to work out. But before I was up I heard her singing, and she met me with a kiss and a smile.

"I've a plan," she explained. "I'll be very busy for the next week or two. And you're not to ask questions."

It was the old, gay Isabel. Some-

where in the night she had rounded her corner, and Gifford had been made way with.

So I held my peace. Isabel went downtown that day, and every day, so she was always out when Gifford came. But I heard her talk to him by telephone, and refuse his invitations. She talked freely and blithely, explaining carefully that she was busy and had no time for play. Then one day she suddenly grew complaisant, and agreed to a trip in the *Bumble Bee*. It was a curious ride. Isabel sat by Gifford, as usual, and talked to him steadily. I did not think that she talked well. What I heard sounded like a Meisterschaft exercise.

After about ten days she came home breathless one afternoon, and pulled me to the front door.

"Here is the surprise," she cried. "Look, Kate, look!"

I looked out wrathfully, for I dislike to be jostled. In front of the door stood an automobile with Jimmie Clark in the driver's seat. Jimmie was the lad who ran errands for us, drove nails, and looked after the furnace. I saw the whole story.

"Isabel, you've bought a machine!"

She caught me round the neck. "I couldn't help it. Don't scold till you've ridden in it. And Jimmie runs it perfectly."

Jimmie did run it well, and the car was comfortable. I rode a little grimly that day, but I admitted to myself that I was excited. It rather went to my head to think that we were traveling in that smooth, lordly fashion in our own machine. And it was a neat little car, somewhat high-swung and short-bodied, perhaps, if one had the lines of the *Bumble Bee* in mind, but still most jaunty and capable. It was painted bottle green.

"The Mote," Isabel explained. "A green mote dancing gayly in the sunbeam. We can't hope to live up to the *Bumble Bee*." That was her only reference to Gifford.

That evening she argued the matter out with me. "I couldn't help buying the car," she insisted. "I care, I care

for the motion of the machine. It's getting a singular hold on me. I'm restless when I'm not in it. It must be the swinging through space that fascinates me. It grows on me. So I'd rather buy a car, and give up other things. And it's not going to be so ruinously expensive. Jimmie will wash the windows, and beat the rugs, and do all sorts of things that the maid can't do, and that we pay for now. And we pay Jimmie a mere song. Don't say anything, Kate. We'll enjoy it."

We did enjoy it. We went at our old life with zest. It was autumn, and the world was in town; we began a round of small frivolities, and the gay little *Mote* was part of it. We shopped in it, and joggled to receptions on its shiny black cushions. It was a very social car at that time, and was the pet jest of our circle.

If any of all this was aimed at Gifford, he was impenetrable. "I think it's a very good idea," he said in his quiet, cordial voice, when he was told of our purchase. "I think you'll enjoy it."

I searched his face, but found nothing but pleased attention. Isabel, too, looked absolutely guileless. I was ashamed of both of them, and I took Isabel's green motor veil, and put it in the fire.

So the autumn went merrily, on the surface, at least, and I waited for the winter rains to close us in to our dinners and our intimacies, and cure the unrest that I thought I saw in Isabel. But the rains did not come. It was a dry winter, with a procession of brilliant days, clean-swept with high north winds. The air bred restlessness, and we had to use will power to keep from buzzing around on impossible concerns as if we were useless little dynamos ourselves. But it was not weather to stay indoors. It was superb motoring in the dry, electric air, and the *Mote* ventured farther afield.

There were many to go with us. An epidemic of buying motors was upon us, and practically all of our little world moved on tires. Then there was always the *Bumble Bee* as bodyguard. It was natural that Gifford should be

included in our plans; our summer of motoring with him had established that. He filled his car with friends, but put no one in front. He reinstated his chauffeur as driver, while he himself took the seat that had been Isabel's.

At first the *Mote* held her own well, but in a few weeks she began to wheeze on the hills. It was an unpleasant noise, and I noticed it the more that the *Bumble Bee* behind us would be taking the same grade without a whisper. The big car was always at our heels. It irritated me.

Then the *Mote* began stopping unexpectedly. It was always some trifling thing that had happened, we would be told after Jimmie and the men of the party had spent a grease-daubed hour under the *Mote's* wheels. A pin had slipped or a bolt gone wrong; it was nothing against the *Mote*; it might have happened to any car. But it did not happen to the other cars. It was invariably the *Mote* who made us two hours late at the place where we had ordered luncheon. Gifford never helped us when the world and the car went wrong; he never touched the *Mote* in any way. He sat stolid while the other men worked.

It wouldn't have been so hard if we could have found a legitimate cause for our troubles. But no mechanic could unravel the *Mote's* mysteries.

"It's the creature's nerves that have gone wrong," Jack Hunter declared. "It acts like a fashionable neurasthenic."

And indeed it did. It would start blithely from the repair shop where it had spent a week, and stop in the second block. Then, after we had asked some one to tow us home, one of us would give the crank a last vengeful turn, and the engine would begin to chug again. Motoring was no longer a matter of swinging through space. It was mathematical; a calculation of distances in the ratio of possibilities. We had covered this mile—could we make another? I grew to sitting on the edge of the seat; it was a pose of propitiation.

And always there was the great silent

Bumble Bee behind us, humming softly to keep in check while we jerked and panted along. It was the St. Bernard and the terrier. It made us ridiculous, and I knew it rasped Isabel in every nerve.

One day when we were coughing up a long grade with clouds of steam pouring out from under us, Isabel suddenly put her hand on Jimmie's arm.

"Stop! I must speak to Mr. Gifford."

Gifford came over to us. "What is it, Mrs. Gray? Do you want me to go ahead of you?"

He looked very impassive, and Isabel eyed him a little piteously. "Yes, will you, please?" she said. "Will you please keep ahead of us after this? Your car is more powerful. It—it worries me. Will you please go on?"

I sat hard on my seat to keep from protest. Was this Isabel? I did not want her to beg for favors, and I doubly did not want the men who were with us to hear her in this new rôle. But Gifford was stolid as a Chinese.

"I'm sorry," he said evenly, "I'm sorry, but I must stay where I am. I regret that I worry you, but I'm not sure of your brakes or your car. I must keep behind you in case there should be trouble." And he lifted his hat, and went back to his own car.

We drove on, but Isabel was white. She had been wrong in forcing the issue when there were people to overhear, and she knew it. But she was nervous and over-keyed. I noticed that Gifford looked thin and lined, also. I tried to say it was the weather.

That day marked a break between Gifford and our party. There began to be a little antagonism, just where I could not tell, but it was in the air. He was always in our motor parties, but he came but seldom to our house. And we revived old tales of him. Men at our table reminded themselves of how Gifford had scalped his colleagues in the Cedar Valley water deal. A man to be watched, they decided.

"The old predatory, barbarian type," Jack Hunter drawled. "Breaking people into subjection—that's all life means

to him; business or pleasure. I imagine life bores him outrageously, now that he has things pretty much his own way. Pity he doesn't come a few croppers just to whet his interest in things. He's fallen off a lot this year. At this rate he'll soon be doing the sanitarium circuit with the rest of the world-weary millionaires."

Isabel leaned over toward him. "Tell me," she demanded. "Tell me the truth, Jack. We won't have innuendoes at this table. We've been Mr. Gifford's guests. Tell me, do you really know anything against Mr. Gifford's business honesty? I want to know it all."

Poor Jack! I knew he loved her. He looked at the table. "What do you want to know, Isabel? What I know, or what I believe?"

"Both."

He still looked down. "I know nothing. There are tales of him, but tales follow every well-known man. I believe— Well, the man has made a great deal of money in a short time. No one questions his force—and force is hard. As to his being unscrupulous—I believe him capable of good and bad; both in large degree. But no man who has captured power as he has, has been very sensitive to principle."

It was brave of Jack, for he took risks in saying what he did. Most women would prefer that a man should purr over and condone a rival. And it was hard on Isabel. She had always been sensitive to a man's business reputation.

I did not wonder that she was restless that night; though, for that matter, she was restless by day. She was losing health and looks under some inward drain, and it did not help the tension in our air that she began to practice the most penny-wise economy. I usually let things work out as they would, but this time I interfered.

"We're living beyond our income," I arraigned.

She looked up from her check book with her old smile. "Yes, we are. You've been a dear not to say anything before. We're appallingly behind. The

repairs to the *Mote*— Well, I won't tell you what they've cost us."

"Then we'll sell it." I could have cried with relief. "We'll sell it tomorrow. We'll sell the *Mote*, and start afresh."

And then Isabel flashed into the only anger I had ever known from her. We would economize, but not in that way. She would not sell the *Mote*. She would dismiss the maid; she had already dismissed Jimmie; she intended to run the *Mote* herself.

We argued the madness for a week. I could as profitably have talked to a cataract. We dismissed the maid.

"It's the only way," was her ultimatum. "We must have a car. We can't stay at home, and I will not ride in—I'll not ride in any car that is not mine."

So she was our chauffeur, and she carried the situation so jauntily that I doubt that our friends made much of it. She ran the car daintily, and her light figure looked well at the wheel. There were always men with us to do the cranking and the hard work, and they thought the whole thing amusing. But I thought it hideous, and I knew that Gifford did the same. There was no mistaking the strain in his face during those days. Isabel ran the machine much faster than Jimmie had done, and the *Bumble Bee*, that still dogged our tires, had to make many a swift and unexpected turn.

Meanwhile every mile was telling on the *Mote*, and it was losing all hold on respectability. The gloss had rubbed from its paint now, and I could see it as it was, a vulgar-looking little car, with loud ways and cheap, smart finishing. I hated it the more that it pretended to be a big car. It had most of the fittings of the *Bumble Bee* itself, but by this time everything about it had jarred into creaking shabbiness. Even its one virtue was against it. When it pleased it was a wonderful hill climber, and could sometimes pull by the big cars. But it did it with noise that you could hear for miles. It was shoddy, and bustling, and pretentious, and it hurt me to see Isabel sitting behind its cracked varnish and thin, dented brass

work. I loathed its shape, and its size, and every whir of its noisy engine.

"It's not a *Mote*," I exploded. "It's a house fly; a green, buzzing, obnoxious house fly."

Isabel looked at me. I knew that she thought me vulgar; I was not sure but I was myself.

I count that time by crises. One of them came one afternoon when the *Mote* had been unusually vicious. We were stopping for a moment to cool our engine, and we were alone; that is, the men of our party had walked away. I lay down in the tonneau seat, and Isabel drooped over the wheel. We were tired, tired, tired.

Then Mr. Gifford walked over to us. He ignored me—I think he did not see me—and stood by Isabel.

"Mrs. Gray," he said, "come in my car for the rest of the day, and let my man run yours. Please come."

She only shook her head at him without trying to smile. "No, not today," she said indifferently.

I doubt that she had ever before let him see her openly listless. He suddenly laid his hand over hers on the wheel—he had always seemed careful not to touch even her finger—and he pulled the dust robe aside. "Please come," he reiterated. "Come now. Come and sit beside me in the *Bumble Bee*, and tell me when there is dust ahead. It has been so long; so long. Come with me. Come now."

I had never heard such a tone. I did not know that it was in the man's throat; in any man's. But then, I had never heard a man's voice shaken by longing. And Gifford was a powerful man.

Isabel pressed back in her seat. "No, no!" Her voice was curiously little and still. "No, Mr. Gifford, I will not ride in your car."

"Why?" he said. "Why?" I saw him take her hand in both his own. "Why, Isabel, why? Why will you not ride in my car? Why?"

And then she pushed up her motor veil, and looked at him. "You say that I can see dust ahead," she said, still in

the same slow whisper of a voice. "Perhaps I can. Dust ahead means danger. It is because I see dust ahead for both of us that for months I have refused to ride beside you in your car."

He dropped her hand. His face grew angular as a mask; it had been very tender. He looked at her; looked searchingly, estimatingly, as he might at a clerk whom he intended to engage. "Perhaps you are right," he said slowly. "You are a hard woman—all caution and suspicion. Whatever I have been I have been willing to take hazards. I think you are right." And without another word or look he went back to his car.

Isabel pulled down her veil, and sat very still. But we drove home as if nothing had happened.

I thought we would never see the man again, and I gave thanks that night, although I cried a little; cried over life, and its general unhappiness, and all that I had missed and would never know. But I was mistaken. Gifford followed our car as usual, though he evaded speaking to us except in general greeting. It would have caused comment if he had dropped out, and I thought that he came to save his face with the other men, and so refused him my pity.

I could not be wasteful of pity in those days, for I needed it myself. It was a daily discipline to live with Isabel. She was abnormally gay, and abnormally unreasonable. She ran the car as if she were Folly incarnate. Every time that she looked at the big blue car behind us she fed her engine with spark and gasoline, and raced away.

We had some weeks of this, and I made up my mind to end it. But I agreed to go to Mount Hamilton first. It was to be our last trip of the season. We had been too much afield.

We made the ascent of the mountain without trouble, for it was one of the *Mote's* pretentiously well-behaved days. When it came to the return down the mountain, there was some discussion. There were four machines in the party, and it was decided that the two medi-

um-sized cars should lead, and the *Mote* follow.

"That will give us a chance to get out of your way, Mrs. Gray," they said, "and save you dust. Go slowly. Gifford will follow you as usual. He'll be there if anything happens."

So we started. But madness had entered Isabel, and she tried to keep close to the car in front of us. She took the curves like a scared cat, and raced on every inch of level. The pace grew more reckless with every mile. At last we went around a curve on two wheels, and skidded toward the edge of the cañon. That left a clear space on the inside, and Gifford's car dashed in. It swung in front of us, sliding, elegant, leisurely. He drew it at right angles.

"Stop!" he commanded. It was wasted breath, for he had already blocked our way.

He dismounted, and squared himself in front of Isabel. "Listen," he said. "Mrs. Gray, you are coming in my car. I am coming in here. Wait! From this day on, I shall never ride behind you, or near you. I have followed you, and you have hated it. I had to do it. You might have needed me. But I am through. You shall have your own way. You have beaten me. It was not that I wanted to conquer you. I was afraid for you, and I couldn't keep away. It's over. But you are not to drive another mile on this mountain today. Give me your seat."

I think I am quoting almost his words. He said them measuredly, looking straight at Isabel, and disdainful of the rest of us.

Isabel stepped into the road. She pulled at her veil. I saw her face, and she, too, had forgotten us.

"Yes, I will go with you," she said. "But stay in your own car, Mr. Gifford. Let your man come in mine. I will go with you."

He shook his head. He looked her over very gravely and fully. "No, I think not. There will be dust ahead. The road is treacherous. No, I think not."

And then she looked at him in turn.

Looked at him openly, closely, dwelling on his face as I once saw a woman looking at her dead. The hungry look that I had seen that winter in his face showed now in hers. Their eyes met, and I knew that no power of right or wrong, or fear of things present, or things to come, could keep them apart after that.

"I am not afraid," she said, and her eyes did not leave him. "If you wish it, I will ride beside you. If the road

is treacherous, if there is dust ahead for us, I wish to meet it with you."

They were married the next day. As yet their happiness is almost terrible, and I try to close my eyes to it. I cannot tell how it will turn out. It is a question whether even a love like theirs is enough in itself to bridge temperament, taste, and belief, and make a perfect marriage. But whatever they meet, they will sit close together. Further than that, I do not know.



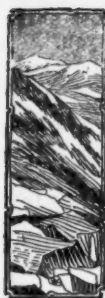
A CRADLE SONG

CHILD with those questioning eyes,
 Where will thy mother be
 When thou hast grown more wise,
 When life has answered thee?
 When future hopes and fears,
 Built up of youthful dreams,
 Nourished by happy years,
 Fade as the sunset gleams?
 Child with those questioning eyes,
 Where will thy mother be?

Child of the tender heart,
 Where will thy mother be?
 When thou hast played thy part,
 In life's brief tragedy?
 When through rare days of joy,
 Should'st thou be forced to learn
 That love is but a toy
 To cherish, then to spurn.
 Child of the tender heart,
 Where will thy mother be?

Child of my life and love,
 This is my prayer for thee:
 May thy faith strongest prove
 In worst extremity—
 And may thy smallest need
 Of counsel, love, or praise
 To me thy footsteps lead
 Through life—and death always.
 Child of my life and love,
 Thine to Eternity.

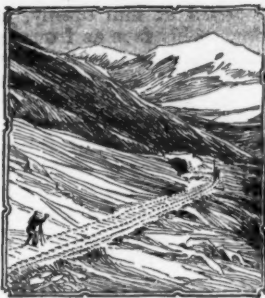
JULIA W. SAWTELLE.



The THREE-LEGGED MAN

BY

ELIA W. PEATTIE



HE had borne them in love and brought them up in faith—five men children—and now, one by one, they had left her. It was natural enough, she told herself, that the sons of John Messenger should go about the world's work. He never had taken the easiest path; and whatever path he took she had been content to follow. But John was in his grave, and she would have been quite alone except for little grateful Mary Lee. In the first hour of her orphanage, Susan Messenger had taken her in; and now in the period of her own denudation Mary had returned to her.

Five men children: Henry, Homer, Robert, Lemuel, and Tom. Well, that is to say, Thomas. Though Susan would not go so far as to admit that he had been the best loved, still, there was a something— Why, even little Mary, who said so little, had noticed it. Not that she spoke about it first. But Susan Messenger talked of it, one night, when the wind was blowing and the two women sat alone, and Mary said it was so, there *was* a something that—

Yet he had been the most restless of them all; more like his father than the others. Henry had gone to the city to practice law, and had married, and done well in his profession and his marriage. He and his wife lived in an apartment uptown, and dined nights at a fashion-

able café. They both had written that they were sorry they had no guest chamber. Homer was acting as translator for an importing house in Panama, and had had no chance to marry, but he kept a monkey and was something of a fancier of birds. Robert was not quite so strong as the others, and he was down in the mountains of North Carolina, spending his days on horseback and liking the touch of danger involved in his duties under the government. Lemuel had taken to the law, too, and was making a conspicuous place for himself in Manila.

Susan had taught herself to do without them all, except, for inexplicable reasons—Tom! It always had been different with her and Tom. He intrigued her imagination; made up for her a second romance. He had chosen the profession of a civil engineer, and three years before the night that his mother had talked of him on the night of the great wind, she had kissed him good-by and sent him out into the West.

The West meant much to Susan. She thought of it as a place of tests and achievements, where men grew to their full stature. Not that she, personally, had any desire to prove its capacities. She had grown to womanhood in White Pigeon, and when she walked down the street, even now that her hair was white, there were many who called her by her given name. She was settled in the town in the same sense that she was settled in her own house. Doors opened to her there with a never-failing

welcome. In spite of her largeness of outlook, "the folk" seemed to live at White Pigeon, and the strangers to dwell elsewhere.

So, when she first was left alone she managed very well. She leased two farms, and the three brick stores on Central Street, and busied herself with house and garden and church. She now had time, she told herself, to think of others; when she was doing for the boys she seemed only to be doing for herself. She made dainties for the sick, and called on the old, she fashioned beautiful little garments for expectant mothers, and embroidered towels for the church bazaar. And every Sunday, after church, she wrote to each of her five sons.

But as time went on Mary Lee could see that the step of her "Aunt Susan" grew slower. She slept badly, and was aimless when she arose in the morning. Her appetite fell off, and it grew easier to stay at home than to go out to the houses of neighbors. Though she had been the founder of the society which placed the library and the pictures and statues in the White Pigeon high school, she did not, that last year, so much as go to commencement, and her chair on the platform stood vacant. Mary Lee, who taught English at the high school, came home with a great story of the surprise every one had felt.

"They couldn't believe their eyes, Aunt Susan, dear," said little Mary Lee. "The superintendent said he hardly knew how to give out the diplomas, he was so used to having you help. Miss Frizell was simply huffy. 'What was the use of my getting her pearl silk done,' said she, 'if she wasn't going to wear it to commencement?' I made it extra long," said she, "so she could feel comfortable in it on the platform. I know how she hates to show her feet." Though why you do, Aunt Susan, dear, I don't know, when they're the prettiest little feet in White Pigeon."

"It is queer that I didn't feel to go," said Susan Messenger impersonally. "But, really, Mary Lee, I'm best at home nowadays." She rested her head

against the high back of her rocker, and showed to Mary's startled eyes a strange pallor and transparency, as if the encasement of her spirit were wearing thin.

Mary Lee flung off her rose-trimmed hat and threw herself on her knees by Susan's chair.

"What is it?" she cried, with sudden tears. "Dear Aunt Susan, you grow weaker and weaker. Don't look so heavenly and strange, dear! Tell Mary Lee——"

"It's Tom!" broke in Susan, clapping her thin hands over her eyes. "I want him, Mary Lee! I want my Tom! I've written and written, and he won't come. He won't let me go to see him, either. He can't, you know. There's no place for me to stay. I can see that, of course. But it's three years, Mary, and now in three or four weeks his work on the Midland Western will be done—and he's going to Alaska, Mary. They've offered him a place on that Alaskan road, and he's going to take it. He says he wants 'to make good,' says he won't come home till he has the overseeing of a camp of his own. He's only an instrument man now, only 'a three-legged man'—that's what the workmen call him, Mary. I told you, didn't I? Isn't it quaint? A three-legged man. Just a part of the transit, you know—just a fine kind of a machine, with the heart all dried out of him somehow, Mary." And the rest was lost in sobs.

She was not even able to get up the stairs alone that night to her bed, but had to lean on Mary's shoulder, which, being so much lower than her own, made an excellent prop. And after she was safe in her bed, and lay looking dully at all the familiar things—the quaint braided rugs, and the well-kept old mahogany, and the ambrotypes of her father and mother—Mary Lee slipped away to write a letter. Among other things, she said:

I know, Tom, that men have to do the work of the world, and that they cannot stop for woman's needs. If they stopped whenever a woman sighed or wept, I suppose there would be very little done. As long as I

am young, Tom, I am sure I shall never, never hint to any man, by so much as a word, that he is to leave his work and set his pace to mine. Although it might, in a large way, be better and wiser for a man so to pause for a woman's sake, still if any man did that for me, it would have to be quite, quite by his own volition. However I might feel my youth and his going, yet I would leave him to his man's task; yes, indeed, Tom.

But to be old! Oh, Tom, to be old and alone! Of course, you will say that I am here with your mother, and so that she is not entirely alone. But, my dear, I am not her own, after all, though she has been so loving to me. I suppose a mother has a sort of homesickness which is different from any other variety. She thirsts for her children—as the hart thirsteth for the water brook. Of course, I don't know why she desires you above all the others. She wouldn't say she loved you best. But she has for you the maternal feeling, plus something else. Something mysterious. You satisfy her, Tom. You are, perhaps, what she wanted her husband to be, and what he somehow, through no fault of his own, was not. You are her chosen.

I know that you do not care much for this little town. Dozens of young men have left it. It was too monotonous, and you knew the people through and through, so that it had no surprises for you. Yet, if you will come back, your father's old friend, Mr. L'Hommedieu, will give you the place in his factory which he intended for his nephew who died. Your mother was talking with Mr. L'Hommedieu the other day, and he told her what he would like to do for you.

This is all I have to say, Tom. If it's pride that's keeping you from coming back, let me ask if it's worth it? Your pride, Tom! What is it made of? Not gold, but cheap gilt, if it keeps you from your mother. Oh, Tom, I don't like to scold. I am, only

MARY LEE.

There were a dozen tents at Milky Way Camp, gleaming white upon the leprous saline desert. In one of these tents Tom Messenger bunked with Kilpatrick, the stake "artist." Conventionality, perhaps, might have decreed that Tom, as transit man, should tent it with "Sour Dough" Higgins, his levelman, but as every man in the four crews at the camp knew, Tom and Higgins were not affinities, whereas Kilpatrick, who said little, and that in the most diffident of Virginian draws, cottoned to Tom. Kilpatrick—Pat for short—was, undeniably, the slowest man in camp. Very little came out of

Pat's soul save grotesque and seductive devillkins, which he drew with his blue Keil on the stakes during survey. When, now and then, he grew tired of picturing his blue devils he would try his hand at sketching Tom as he stood with legs apart and head bent before his transit, mingling Tom's slender legs with that of the tripod, till he was, indeed, the three-legged man the huskies called him.

The night Tom's crew came back from the survey down Red Lariat way, Tom found Mary Lee's letter at headquarters.

"What's a fellow to do?" he demanded of Pat as they squatted side by side before their tent. Far as they could see stretched the sinister salt-mottled plain, treeless, devoid even of desert flowers. The two beds, two suit cases, a tin pail, and a wash basin constituted absolutely the only furnishing of their shelter.

"I'd like to go home," Tom repeated, "but I want to make good first, Pat."

"Want to be like Caffin, I reckon," drawled Pat. "Can't be satisfied till you're like him."

Caffin was the engineer in command—a taciturn man who had left his smile back East. No one ever had quite succeeded in explaining Caffin. He, certainly, never explained himself. He asked no questions and gave no replies, sought no sociability, asked no favors, made no friends. He had the Napoleonic hardihood without the Napoleonic charm. Without personal magnetism, he secured obedience by the savage power of his disapproval.

Tom laughed at the idea that he could wish to be like him.

"He'll be looking us up in a few minutes," he said. "Caffin doesn't like to have our muscles get stiff from lack of use, that's certain. However, we're sure to have at least a day's rest, I should think. I'll take time to think over that question about going home. I'd like to, Kilpatrick—but I have promised to go take a hand in that Alaska project, you know. My soul, Pat, what could I do in White Pigeon?"

"Live like a Christian," said the boy.

"It makes me swear just to think of it," retorted Tom. "Little two-by-four place. It's too tame for me! Of course to go home on a visit—that's different. But mother can't expect me to give up my profession, can she? What was the use of sweatin' away at college for four years, and then livin' out here in holes like this if I'm going to—"

But the sound of a beaten kettle summoned them to supper.

Caffin was there diffusing silence. All pretense at talk died when he sat at table with the men. Inscrutable, voracious, formidable, he gorged himself like a lonely anaconda, eating with a kind of sullen passion.

After supper was over he called Tom aside.

"We want you to stake a line from Hobart to the tangent running down from Dubois to the Cobra Camp," he said succinctly. "You'll start at four to-morrow, drive to the dike, put up there for the night, and start on next morning. Sight to Pilot's Peak, and carry food for six days. Stake about five hundred feet apart—that ought to do out there."

"You want me to lead the party, sir?" asked Tom in surprise. "You're not going with us?"

"Not a damned foot," replied Caffin. "Tell the men, and have them get ready to-night."

"I'm afraid they're not outfitted as they ought to be, sir," Tom said apologetically. "Their shoes are bad, for one thing. And they ought to have pigskins for their water."

"Oh, they'll do," broke in Caffin. "The wagon'll be around at four to-morrow morning."

He pulled a case of cigars from his pocket, helped himself to one, and walked away.

"The devil!" said Tom Messenger sweetly, and went to tell the boys.

The dike is the outpost of the desert. Here the shelving strata of rock, declining from the outcropping hills to the white floor of the Great Salt Desert, gives forth a fresh and sparkling stream of water, and within sound of

its song, the nine young men from Milky Way camped the first night.

They were up before dawn the second day, making their last preparations. These, however, could go little beyond the filling of their water bottles, each man carrying four of these slung across his shoulders. The mules were to take them on as far as possible, but by the time the sun sent its announcing streamers of light from behind the distant mountains, the animals already had begun to sink in the salt. Five miles more saw them struggling ankle deep in the saline grit.

"It's time to 'hoof it,'" announced Tom succinctly.

They loaded up briskly, assuming about sixty pounds weight to a man. Pilot's Peak showed her irregular beauty across the far-reaching miles of plain, and between themselves and it billowed the soft gray desert air, like tumbled chiffon. Nothing else was to be seen. They had come out where there was nothing, and seemed to move in a blown bubble of gray glass. A soft wind, whispering along the floor of the desert, carried with it a crisp, metallic sound, and brought to their nostrils the "ancient and fishlike smell" of the Great Salt Desert.

Little by little the air grew golden, then clarified—and day and the desert were before them.

"There are two things," said Tom, "that it behooves us not to waste. The first is time; the second is water."

He was right, they knew. They trusted him after their fashion, and they trusted themselves. Quite aware, as they were, that they should never have been sent upon this expedition so dangerous without their engineer and a much better equipment than the one they had, they nevertheless obeyed unquestioningly. They were building the Midland Western, and they felt the point of honor as a volunteer soldier would have felt it.

For the first three hours Pilot's Peak swam in the sky like a white angel, and they made progress rapidly, but presently Messenger noticed that the glass was playing tricks. Aberrations

of light deflected the line of vision, and as a fishing line seen beneath the water seems to deflect and run at an angle from itself, so the air fooled and teased him. Then, suddenly, the Peak went out. No visible cloud had arisen to hide it. It simply ceased to make itself manifest.

"Well," Messenger said philosophically, "it's a good thing we got started when we did. We've got our beginnings. Now we'll survey to a back sight."

So, like crabs, they made progress backward across the waste. By noon they had begun to realize what lay before them. The air, impregnated with salt, was biting into their lips; their eyes suffered from the glare. Their throats began to ache with dryness, and to the actual oppression from thirst was added the greater affliction, the fear of thirst, which dried their throats faster even than the heat of the midday sun. Moreover, they already were encompassed by the mirage. It beset them with an army of shapes; sent its battalions to bewilder and dismay them, to threaten them with menacing figures and entice them with lies. There a gaunt Djin seemed to toss his arms, here gigantic trees waved their great boughs, yonder two men walked carrying picks in their hands, farther still a long green pool, shaped like a letter S, seemed to ripple between grassy banks.

The curious part of it all was that, though the men repudiated ninety-nine-hundredths of these visions, the hundredth one "got them." Pat actually hallooed at the two men with picks, for example. No one went so far as to have confidence in the water; they knew that for the father of desert lies. Yet Higgins got taken in by something that looked like a dog. Not that he thought he saw the dog, but he said it was the mirage of a dog; he thought they would be coming up with it presently. What they did come up with, here and there, were piles of bones.

"Some outlaw horse coaxed a herd of wild horses this way, I reckon," the Utah chainman explained. "They got out and couldn't find their way back,

and they piled themselves on each other when they found they were dying. I've noticed that many a time—a dying horse doesn't like to be alone. Knows what's coming, I guess."

By four in the afternoon the mirage had grown more tantalizing than ever, and the nerves of the men began to feel the strain.

They got to laughing too much, and making foolish jokes about what they saw. Tom drew them taut with a sharp rebuke.

"No fooling, you fellows!" he commanded. "We could go batty and not half try! Play ball, you!"

So they worked till the last second that the light would let them. When night came on the air chilled steadily. They had been given no blankets, and they were, to say the least, exceedingly uncomfortable. They begged for a fire, and Tom let them use a very few stakes to make a little blaze. It created at least a point of brightness in the black immensity. Finally they curled up in a bunch for warmth, and slept. They had no need to fear the approach of any creature, for nothing that padded or flew sought that leprous place. They had that forsaken portion of the world quite to themselves; they were the heroic and pathetic guardians of its solitudes.

They knew themselves, however, by no such large names when they awoke the next morning, chilled to the marrow. Tom let them build a small fire, and use so much of their water as would furnish each man with a meagre cup of hot coffee. They ate their beans, their crackers, their canned meat, and tomatoes, and set about their tasks. The Peak was still invisible, and they continued to work backward. No one commented any longer upon the grotesquerie of the mirage. They let it do its worst, and refused to recognize its rag-and-bobtail procession of shapes.

As their difficulties increased, that "something" in Tom came to the surface. The tones of his voice grew heartier. As well as he could with his sore lips, he whistled. His whole manner heartened his men. It had come

upon him in the night that these sunburned boys from Utah, from Nevada, and California, were younger than he. He held their very lives in his hand, perhaps; it was his business to see that they got safe across that unspeakable waste for the sake of the people who loved them.

That thought got somehow to stinging in Tom's own consciousness. What would the mothers of those boys think if they could see them as they had been the night before, lying unblanketed upon that wind-swept, salty plain? What would they think if they could see them to-day, hemmed in with taunting phantoms of the air, with shoes cracking open from the salt, with bleeding lips and stinging eyes, a little group of dark, antlike creatures on the great, shining, horrible surface of the desert?

What would his mother think—she who, from her solitude, had called to him? Should he go to her? Should he leave the West, with all it meant of opportunity and adventure, of struggle and sin, of zest and swagger? Should he go back to White Pigeon, and shut himself up in a factory—he who was “blooded to the open and the sky”? Should he set his pace to women, to his mother's failing feet, to little Mary Lee's modest pace?

Something wild and strong and resentful called out to him that he would not. Like the “outlaw” horse of which they had spoken, having broken loose from domesticity and answered the call of freedom, he raged at the thought of the bridle and the rein. That quality of emphasis or intensity which made him loved by women and which set him up, even in that impious democracy, as a sort of leader, operated in him now for a continuation of his liberty. Some primeval and exultant masculinity in him refused to succumb to woman guidance.

As the days went on and he led his little party over the miles of blanched desert, as the taunting shapes of the mirage weakened their wills and blurred their judgment, as they walked with half-bared and bleeding feet, as the juice of the canned pears and to-

matoes alone remained to slake their thirst, as their swollen tongues and lips forced the men to speak seldom and almost inarticulately, Tom tossed the pros and cons of his question up in his mind as a juggler tosses his balls.

In the daytime it seemed to him that he would keep his selfish liberty at any cost; keep his companionship with these rough but free men. At night, he was assailed by memories of his home, of his boyhood, of his mother's face; the tones of her voice, her little tricks of speech—little jests and fooleries—came back to him vividly and intimately.

It was the evening of the fifth day.

The boys had lain down early that night, but they did not sleep well. The uncooked food, the teasing thirst, and the forced, rapid work were telling upon them. Sour Dough Higgins was feverish and cried out at intervals. Tom had seen that Higgins was suffering more than any one in the party, though he had made no complaint. He was a “queer cuss,” anyhow. Almost from babyhood he had looked after himself, and now the silent, friendless, sullen fellow for the first time struck Tom as being more pathetic than mean.

He sat up suddenly, choking with thirst. Tom went to his assistance, but there was only the acid juice of the tinned tomatoes to offer, and this ate into the boy's lacerated lips. He sputtered out something, and then caught hold of Tom's arm.

“One day more'll finish it, won't it, Messenger?” he asked.

“One day more,” Tom assured him. “We've kept the pace up, I can tell you. All bothers me is, we were promised water to-night. The team was to drive out from Cobra Camp to meet us. Calfin said he'd send word to have it done. But there wasn't a thing in sight at nightfall—not a thing. I don't know whether the boys can hold out another day or not.”

“Got to do it,” muttered Sour Dough through his thickened lips, with a new valor. “You brace 'em up, Messenger. You know how. I used to think you was too damned cheerful, Tom, but I guess you're the stuff, after all.”

"Oh, well," said Tom, "we've got to see things through now. You're the worst off of any of us, and you'll pull yourself together in the morning. Besides, the water wagon ought to be in sight then. Once we get our eyes on that, we're all right."

"Yes—the rest of you. Say, Tom, what's the use for me, though? I ain't got no place to go after I get through. There ain't a livin' soul that cares a damn if I live or turn up my toes. If you just knew, once, what it was to feel like I do, Tom, rattlin' around in the world like a pea in a dried pod, you'd understand that it's purty much all the same to me if I drop in my tracks or git across."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Tom. "What's come to you? You've got everything before you! Somebody'll care enough about you yet, don't you worry."

"You're talkin' like a man with a full pocketbook to a hobo with nothin' in his pants' pockets, Tom. There's your mother writin' to you twice a week, year in an' year out, an' honin' and honin' fur ye. There's some other nice little critter with a purty han'writin', droppin' you a note now and then. There's friends all over the country seein' that a line gits to yeh, so yeh won't feel discouraged. And here's me—nary a letter. Don't believe the postmaster so much as knows there is such a feller as me out at Milky Way Camp."

Tom answered by thumping Sour Dough reassuringly on the back, and, lying down near him, they stared up at the stars, which burned low and bright amid the blue-black vault. Dear and familiar they looked—home stars in that strange place. Tom had seen them many a time lying on his back in the lush grass of the little meadow back of his home; had seen them when he had only to turn from their brightness to the nearer and yet sweeter radiance of the light in the sitting-room window.

Usually when he walked up the path from the side gate he could see his mother in the low chair by the reading lamp, rocking intermittently, sewing,

reading, or writing her letters. Her shapely head with its waving hair, her little quick, gay lift of it when any one spoke to her came to him and smote him with a pang. And near her, quietly always, with a daughter's service, if not all of a daughter's rewards, moved little Mary Lee, busy about many things, grateful, patient, wise with her clear, young wisdom.

Through the stench of the horrible place where he lay with his fellows, that night there seemed to float to him the perfume of the lavender that scented her soft garments; for a second he visualized her placid little face with its heavy eyebrows, its full lips, its eyes of blue, piercing, yet tender, its downy, dusky cheeks. About her rounded, olive-hued neck clung the slenderest of gold chains, and there was a comb of carved ivory in her hair. Pure and sweet were these women; good and kind and uplooking their ways.

Then the camp came back to him—the squalor, the hideous camp followers, the drunken hobos, the domineering engineers, the base amusements, the miserable food, the disregard of human life. All the homesickness that he so long had fought, emphasizing his bravado to keep himself in countenance, flooded him so sickeningly that for a few moments he seemed almost to lose consciousness. He could feel the wind blowing over him, and he seemed to be yielding to it, and drifting eastward on its wings. Then he started up, shuddering. Sour Dough was choking again badly. Tom jumped to his feet.

"There's one can of pears left, Pat, isn't there? I told you to save it for to-morrow, but Higgins has got to have it now—hear?"

He opened the can with trembling fingers and poured the cool juice into a drinking cup.

"Drink hearty!" he cried, with a laugh. "Drink hearty, pal!"

Then he lay down with his face upon his arms, and slept, with a great resolve growing in him even through his troubled dreams.

The later lilacs were blooming and

the first roses were out in Susan Messenger's garden. Mary Lee gathered them to carry to her friend's room, where she lay at peace, strangely resigned to the flowing of time, to the uneventfulness of her life.

"I've given up, Mary, dear," she said. "I'm not ill, I think, but I've given up."

Mary's dark brows drew together.

"But it's enough to live, Aunt Susan, isn't it? It's summer, and everything is so beautiful. It never has been any more beautiful since the world began. You're needed here, just as music is needed, or flowers. You're flowers and music to many and many in this busy town, I tell you. I wouldn't even try to say what you've been to me—the dayspring from on high, I think."

Susan smiled at the girl.

"I've heard you say, Mary, that I never was selfish; but that isn't true. I've been very selfish in my own way. Doing for others and getting their love and gratitude has been a sort of dissipation with me. Very likely I've been intemperate with it at times. But now I'm being selfish in a new way. I'm giving up because I want to, because I'm tired of the struggle, because, somehow, there's nothing in it. You see, Mary, they're all gone—five of them gone by their own desire. If I had only one—" But she closed her lips on the word and shook her head. "I mustn't go over that ground again," she said.

Perplexed and half angered, Mary went out to walk again in the garden. Her school was closed, and the long days of vacation were before her. She wanted, desperately, to have them happy. She was as ready to open to happiness as the moon flower is to open to the moon. She did not know how it would come, but she called to it—called to the East and the West, the North and South, for it. She summoned it out of the bestowing future, because she was a woman, a daughter of riant Eve, and because her day was due.

The men went on with their work with a sort of overintelligence. They

did it, and did it well. The mirage seemed this morning to have aped the devils that Pat sketched on his stakes. In varying shades of purple, blue, and gray they danced and leaped, huge and grotesque, in the distance. Beneath them flowed streams and pools of water; and now, when this counterfeit presented itself to the eyes of the group of desert workers, they no longer smiled. They had had no breakfast beyond a few beans and some biscuit, and there had been nothing at all to drink.

"Caffin promised," Tom repeated over and over again. "I know you're almost in, boys, but hold on. Caffin said we'd have water. It's near, somewhere, I know."

It might be near, but it was not within their reach, and hour after hour went by, deepening their anguish. Higgins' feet were quite on the ground now, and his lips had become horrible. They were literally ragged. He no longer so much as tried to talk. They all were silent, in fact, save when compelled to speak.

Suddenly Tom, who had been carrying his instrument forward, stopped and pointed. The eight men with him followed his indication. Before them, not half a mile away, stood four horses with drooping heads, attached to a water wagon. No driver was visible. They started to run, but Tom steadied them.

"Carry the line with you, boys," he commanded, his voice ringing out with a new note of authority in it. "We don't want to go over this ground again. Get in line, chainmen."

They were desperate, yet they obeyed, and set their stakes with care. Only Pat no longer drew blue devils. One thought absorbed them—the water thought, which is as imperative as any that can come to man. Presently they could hear the poor horses groaning and crying in their distress, creatures with themselves of a common need. A few moments later the cause of their predicament was revealed. Beneath the wagon, at full length, lay the driver in a drunken stupor.

"I knew, men, Caffin wouldn't lie about water," muttered Tom. It seemed the one unforgivable sin just then—to lie about water.

After they had slaked their thirst, they watered the suffering animals, who fought like fiends for their turn; and they soused the faithless driver till he strangled. All that was reckless and prodigal in them surged to the surface. The devil-may-care spirit that was the consequence of their neglected and hard estate, came to the surface.

Tom knew the look in their eyes. He knew the base rewards of endurance that most of them would seek. Only Pat, simple and childlike, thought of honest rest and food, and perhaps of sheets of white paper on which to make his little devils. Pat was not quite "all there" at best, and it was to be noticed in the future that after this campaign he was yet a little less "there." His vague brains became more vague, and his solitary whimsical laugh more frequent.

But in Sour Dough's eyes there burned other fires than those of mere recklessness. Danger signals of desperation and resentment gleamed there.

"Higgins," said Tom, as the tents of Cobra Camp showed gray-white against the glittering plain, "when we reach that camp we are still thirty-three miles from a telegraph office, but that isn't going to keep me from letting my mother know——"

"Well?" snapped the other as Tom hesitated.

"That I'm not going to Alaska; that I am going home, and that you're going with me, old man. I've got chances in plenty back there, and they'll take a friend at my say-so."

"Shucks!" said Higgins incredulous-

ly. He was almost angry, and entirely ill. "Don't josh!" he protested.

"No joshin', old man. Straight goods. We report to Caffin. We've done a piece of work that three different outfits have tried at and failed. But will we get an extra penny for it? A word of praise? You bet not! Not if Caffin knows himself. So it's good-by, Caffin, so far as I'm concerned. It's me for the place where they care whether you live or die. It's me for home."

"Look!" cried Sour Dough.

There, crowned with her snows, resplendent, Pilot's Peak shone as benignantly as if she had not failed them in their days of need.

They drew into White Pigeon in the rain—a soft gray summer shower, full of perfumes. The lights of the little town blinked out at them as they drove on through the streets—the same, orderly, decent streets, with their neighborly men, their wholesome women, their happy children. The young men could see them through the open windows, sitting around the tables at supper. The white tablecloths shone out at them. They could see the lamps.

They came to the end of the houses, and to a garden place, where the dripping trees swept the top of the vehicle. Tom drew his breath in gasps.

Higgins, the "sough dough," shivered sympathetically. On they went, past syringa in blossom, past feathery shrubs, and then into the path of soft light from an open door.

There were two women waiting—one with white hair, and another one, shorter, with dark hair and heavy eyebrows—that drew themselves together in an anguish of joy.



THE LIVING TRIANGLE

BY SAMUEL GORDON



ON her way back to the drawing-room, Mrs. Darlington had to pass the door of her husband's study. She listened for a moment or two, and then stepped quickly in.

"I have put your dress clothes ready, George," she said, very matter of fact. "The sleeve links are in the cuffs, and you will find a clean collar and tie on the dressing table."

"Thank you, Janet," Doctor Darlington replied pleasantly.

She hesitated an instant before speaking again.

"Am I disturbing you?"

"Not at all, my dear. I was just jotting down a few notes for my speech to-night. But I've finished now."

"Then I'll stay for a few minutes."

"As long as you like," he smiled.

"I feel as if we hadn't seen anything of each other for weeks, George."

"Yes, the congress has kept us busy, hasn't it? Well, it'll be all over after the conversazione to-night."

"It has been a great time for us," she said pensively.

"I'm glad you enjoyed it."

"It seems a fitting climax to it all. George, I really don't see how much farther we can go. I suppose you know there is talk of your being appointed physician-in-ordinary and getting a knighthood."

"I shouldn't be surprised if we shall hear of something soon," he said, still smiling at her.

She clasped her hands, with an eager little gesture.

"Yes, George, we haven't done badly for ourselves."

"You mean you haven't done badly for me," he corrected her. "Oh, yes, yes—you know you sacrificed yourself for me, Janet. You had in you the making of a career of your own."

"I preferred to be known as the wife of George Turquand Darlington," she replied quickly.

He stooped and rummaged among the papers on his desk. There was something furtive about the movement, as though he did not want her to see his face at that moment. But his laugh rang out heartily enough as he said:

"You are certainly doing your best to make me vain, Janet."

"I wish, though, with more success," she took him up sharply. "Do you know there's a full-page photograph of yours in this week's *Illustrated*?"

"What, another of them?" He laughed, but with an audible tinge of annoyance in the laugh.

Mrs. Darlington's mouth narrowed to a point. "I really can't understand your reluctance to have your picture in the papers, George. Many a man would give a few years of his life for it."

"I have already told you—I don't want to spoil my admirers' illusions," he said lightly.

She looked at the handsome head, with its strong, regular features, and shrugged her shoulders in silence. He turned quickly, and walked across to her.

"Janet, don't let's quarrel over trifles. We've been comrades too long for that."

The hard look about her mouth did not soften. She made her way to the door.

"Dinner at half-past seven—we must be out of the house by eight," she said to him across her shoulder.

Comrades—yes, that described it exactly, she thought to herself, as she sat toying with an unopened book in the drawing-room. She did not know why the word should have any sting for her to-day. They had never been anything else all during their married life. Almost from the very outset they had recognized that the bond between them was that of intellectual congeniality. Their courtship had been reoscented by no romance, even their honeymoon was nothing but an educational tour round Continental hospitals.

Yes, theirs might almost have been called a marriage of convenience. It was with her savings that they had bought his first practice. He knew she was seven years his senior, and therefore showed no resentment against her assumption of the maternal attitude, even when it became accentuated as time went on and there were no children. They got into their groove, and had never since got out of it. She was an exemplary housekeeper, looked after his accounts, engaged his locums, typed his manuscripts, so as to leave his hands free for his work. For all along she had recognized the brilliant possibilities in him, and allowed his ambitions to become the safety valve of her own. He ceased to her to be a man, and became a personified career.

And he had done her credit. She thought of the poky consulting room down Brixton way, where the patients planked down their shillings, mostly in malodorous coppers. And now it was Harley Street, the vice-presidency of the international congress, and all the other things to come. Once more she thrilled at the recollection of the great scene at the opening meeting, when her husband had demonstrated beyond all doubt the great scientific truth which proved him one of the greatest champions in the desperate war against sickness and suffering.

And that brought her to the other point—the question of the photographs. A year ago, Doctor Darlington, then trembling on the brink of his great discovery, discovered also that he must prescribe himself a complete rest if he wished to escape an utter mental and physical breakdown. They had searched out a lonely spot on the south coast of Ireland, and were about to start when Mrs. Darlington's mother fell ill, and he had to go alone. He came back on the day the old lady was buried, some five weeks later. Wrapt in her grief, Mrs. Darlington hardly noticed his return, and by the time she had recovered her interest in life the doctor had got back into the track of his routine.

Gradually, however, it came borne in on her that her husband was changed. He had regained his usual robust health, but there was something in his manner she could not fathom. She surprised him in fits of retrospection in which he seemed powerfully swayed by alternate gusts of ecstasy and fear. What could have happened to him during his absence? With microscopic eye, she reread the letters he had written her. They were colorless, commonplace—quite in accord with the nature of their domestic relations. There was nothing in them to show that he was going through a crisis when he wrote them. And yet, why—of what was he afraid?

The question assailed her with redoubled force when his discovery had been published, and requests for the photo of the new celebrity came pouring in from journals all over the world. To her surprise, he met these requests with an obstinate refusal, making the flimsiest pretexts. She fancied, too, there was a recrudescence of the trepidant uneasiness which had first given her food for thought. Her action was bold and prompt—she sent out the photographs herself. She sent them as a protest against her own suspicions that there was a secret latent in her husband's life. The effect was instantaneous. It set all her doubts at rest. She saw the reason for them. She felt she had basked so much in the sunshine

that she had deliberately gone out of her way to walk amid the shadows. Why should she grudge her husband an idiosyncrasy or two? Had she forgotten that he was a genius?

She closed her eyes, and leaned back in the chair with a sigh of vague content, when a knock at the door interrupted her, and the manservant entered.

"A lady to see you, ma'am."

"No card?" asked Mrs. Darlington.

"No, and she won't give her name, neither, ma'am. She says you wouldn't know her, anyway."

"Then tell her to write to me."

"She insists on seeing you, ma'am. If I may say so, ma'am, she is—ah, well, quite presentable."

"All right! Show her in," said Mrs. Darlington. The mystery in which the caller chose to wrap herself added, on second thoughts, zest to the interview, and would pass the time till dinner.

The woman who presently stepped into the room more than answered the manservant's description of presentability and Mrs. Darlington's anticipation of providing her with a pastime. The stranger exhaled a fascination that had in it something curiously paradoxical. Her quiet, but tasteful, dress fitted close to her body, which, even when stationary, seemed to sway with a supple sinuousness. Her hair was pale gold, and yet appeared every moment on the point of breaking into gray tints. The full, provocative lips drooped sadly. In the lustrously fathomless eyes lurked the repose of a spent storm.

"Won't you sit down? And may I know with whom I have the pleasure—" said Mrs. Darlington, at last finding words to break the spell the stranger had cast on her.

The latter remained standing.

"My name, madam," she replied quietly, "is Mrs. George Turquand Darlington."

Mrs. Darlington started up, with a little cry.

"How extraordinary! I should have thought it impossible. Especially the Turquand, which is such a very uncom-

mon name. What a curious coincidence!"

"Not exactly a coincidence, madam," said the visitor—her voice was very soft and liquid. "I thought I had a right to the name—for the same reason that you have."

Mrs. Darlington made an instinctive movement toward the bell. That stupid James—to saddle her with a lunatic! The other woman took a step forward, and held up a detaining hand.

"One moment, please," she exclaimed, her tone half pleading, half command. "Perhaps you will know me better under the name of Mrs. Arthur Ashwood."

Mrs. Darlington turned to her slowly, her face tense with astonishment. This decidedly complicated matters still further. Yes, she knew the name Arthur Ashwood very well. It was the alias she had herself chosen for her husband before he started on his holiday last year. It was a precaution she had thought of to safeguard him from importunate hypochondriacs who might try to snatch at the chance of getting gratuitous advice from the great physician. But she had not counted on the existence of a Mrs. Arthur Ashwood. An angry look came into her eyes.

"I don't see the point of all this mystery mongering," she exclaimed. "Will you kindly state your business in the fewest possible words?"

"Very well," replied the visitor, quite unmoved. "In the fewest possible words, I will tell you that on July the twenty-fifth of last year your husband married me by license at a registry office in Cork. In the registrar's certificate, he gave his name as Arthur Ashwood, and described himself as a bachelor."

"It's a lie—an unconscionable lie!" cried Mrs. Darlington.

"It's the truth, madam. I have the proof here." And, fumbling in her hand bag, the visitor drew out a document. "A copy of the marriage entry," she explained.

Stonily, Mrs. Darlington stared at the paper. Then, almost inaudibly her lips framed the words:

"Then, on the twenty-fifth of July of last year my husband committed bigamy, and became a criminal, amenable to the law."

"Exactly. We had only known each other for three weeks. We stayed together for a fortnight, and then he disappeared."

Mrs. Darlington stood dumb. Yes, the facts all tallied. In a fierce spasm of comprehension, which set her brain quivering, she saw the full horror of the situation. She pictured her husband a felon in the dock. Doctor Darlington convicted for bigamy—the splendid career toppling to the ground and burying both in its ruins. Her gaze fell on the open page of the *Illustrated*. So that was it—

"Yes, and now you have tracked him at last," she said bitterly.

"Not altogether from that," said the stranger, who had followed her glance. "As a matter of fact, I have made no attempt to track him. I came up to London on business, and I happened to see you and him driving in the streets yesterday. A friend who was with me told me who he was—and who you were."

"And now you have come to settle accounts with him," said Mrs. Darlington. "Oh, no, no," she went on quickly, forestalling the intended interruption, "I can't say that you are not fully entitled to it. Whatever the circumstances of the case, I must admit in fairness that you have been most cruelly used. Do what you have come to do—I shall not ask for mercy."

She broke off at the sound of the turning door handle, and faced round to see her husband stride in. With an agonized cry, she flung herself upon him.

"Oh, George, George—say it is not true!"

He turned from her to the visitor. His face blanched, but otherwise he showed no sign of agitation. His voice, too, was quite even as he answered:

"Yes, Janet—it's quite true."

Without a word, Mrs. Darlington walked away and sat down, with her back to the two, her head drooping into

her hands. After a moment or two, her husband followed with soft, steady step, and touched her on the shoulder.

"Janet," he said. "Janet," he repeated, when she made no move, "I want you to listen to me. Don't be afraid—I shall merely give you a plain statement of the facts. Yes, Janet, it's quite true. I don't know what came over me when I saw this woman. There was something elemental about her that made me forget the world I had lived in till then. Everything seemed wiped clean off the slate of my memory. The one thing I was conscious of was that I was growing old without ever having been young. The pent-up years of my manhood came rushing out from the dim past, and swept me off my feet. Are you listening, Janet?"

Her head lifted a little, but there still was no reply.

"I knew I could not gain her except by taking that one desperate step—and I took it," he continued, in the manner of one repeating a lesson he has learned. "In my wild wooing, I was prepared to stop at nothing. The deceit, the danger, the disgrace—I felt strong enough to bear it all. If a moment of discretion flashed through my disordered brain it was to congratulate myself on the chance of safety that might lie in my assumed name. And then, after two weeks of midsummer madness, I became sane again, and I fled—and have been fleeing ever since; but, of course, without ever escaping."

He wiped the perspiration from his forehead as he paused, and looked expectantly at his wife. She was now sitting bolt upright, and was slowly passing her hand across her eyes, as though brushing films from her vision. Then she rose resolutely.

"Yes, George," she said, eying him squarely, "I quite understand. You have made me see who is to blame in this matter—neither she nor you. If anybody, it is I."

"You—Janet—you?" he echoed blankly.

"I know what I am saying, George. I told you, you have made me understand. Your logic was merciless, even

for a man of science. You felt you were growing old without ever having been young. I was your comrade, and forgot that I should have been your wife. This woman is entirely my fault, and therefore, also, she is my punishment. And now come, the three of us, and let us see what we can do to unravel this awful tangle."

"Mrs. Darlington," began the stranger, speaking for the first time since the doctor's entrance. Mrs. Darlington, however, hushed her with an impatient gesture.

"There can be only one reason why you are here—to obtain your revenge."

"I did not say so," replied the other woman.

"Well, then, more than your revenge—your rights. Very good, madam. I am perfectly willing to yield them up to you. You have every right to my husband, and he has every right to you. It is mine which is the illegal marriage, not yours. I have outlived myself for years."

"Janet!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Silence, George. I have let you speak, now it's my turn. I have stultified my life. My one aim and object of existence was to make you the envy and admiration of the world. As the wife of a disgraced felon, I could not justify myself to myself for a single minute. George—my course is clear. I must make way for her."

"Janet, what are you saying? Make way for her? How?"

"That's my concern. I make the proposition in all good faith and without any bitterness. I make it here and now, madam, so as to insure your silence, and prevent you from doing anything rash. I only ask for a little time."

For an instant, Darlington stood dazed. Then, with a cry of joy, he darted toward her and snatched up her hand.

"Oh, you glorious woman—you wonderful woman! You have a remedy for everything. You always had to think for the two of us. Yes, Janet, you shall go, but only on one condition—that I go with you. I never thought I would have to put my skill to such

use. Janet, you shall die—you shall die as painlessly as you were born. But we shall go together."

The wizened look of age that had come to Mrs. Darlington vanished as though by magic. Her face, blazing with triumph, blossomed like a young girl's. She almost sprang at the other woman.

"Did you hear that?" she cried. "You thought there was perhaps a time when he loved you. Now you can see where his real love is. Oh, you poor fool—to be cheated both out of your rights and your revenge!"

The stranger slowly, smilingly shook her head.

"You are wrong. I am cheated out of nothing, because I expected nothing. You are doubly wrong, because you choose to make your plans without asking if I had anything better to offer."

"Anything better?" echoed Mrs. Darlington, with scathing contempt.

"Yes, if you think life, safety, happiness, of more value than the counsel of despair which you suggest. Oh, yes, I mean it," she continued, meeting Mrs. Darlington's incredulous gaze. "I propose to disappear out of your life as suddenly as I have stepped into it. They are waiting for me at Skibereen Convent."

In an uncontrollable access of anger, Mrs. Darlington seized her by the shoulder, and shook her savagely.

"If you mean it, why have you come to torture us?"

The stranger disengaged herself gently.

"No one knows better than your husband that it is the scalpel's cut which does the healing. I came to heal him—to bring him peace. You heard what he said; he has been fleeing ever since, and has not escaped. I saw that myself yesterday. I watched his face as he sat in the carriage by your side, and I knew that, night and day, his fear was yelping at his heels. I came to tell him that he need fear no longer."

"You could have written him that—there was no need for me to know," persisted Mrs. Darlington.

"Then my work would only have been half done," was the quick reply. "Surely, it was necessary that you should know. I wished to save him the task of confessing to you, as he would have had to do sooner or later. Giant though he is, do you think he could have carried the burden of his secret alone?"

"I don't believe you," Mrs. Darlington cried fiercely. "There is something behind all this. You are going to play some trick on us."

"I don't think you will say that when you have heard all I have to tell you," retorted the other woman quietly. "Perhaps you will trust me better then. I had gone to hide myself in the little coast nook, where your husband found me, in order to clinch the resolve which my heart had been maturing for years. And I had nearly succeeded when, like a miracle, there appeared in that wild solitude a man who had apparently been sent to hold me back to earth."

"Well?" Mrs. Darlington prompted her in an awed whisper.

"But I knew better when he left me. I saw clearly the moral of his coming and going. He personified for me the last upstruggling protest of the flesh, the last lure of the world. And when he went it was to signify to me that I had finished with things earthly, and was permitted to make myself ready for heaven. I am ready now. I have settled my business in London. I have

seen my solicitor for the last time this morning. I told you they are waiting for me at Skibereen Convent."

As she spoke, Mrs. Darlington had been creeping slowly close to her. Then she asked, with an air of piteous pleading:

"Oh, say; who are you—what are you?"

"I don't know. I hope one day God will tell me. If you think of me at all, think of me—as the third side of the triangle."

And without any formula of leave-taking, she turned to go. As she passed the doctor, he planted himself in her way, his head bowed suppliantly.

"Oh, please, only one word—not of forgiveness, but of reproach," he entreated.

"Do you wish me to step back to earth again?" she answered him, smiling.

In tense, breathless silence the doctor and Mrs. Darlington stood listening until the clang of the front door told them that the stranger had left the house. Then, as though by a preconcerted signal, their eyes met.

"Janet," he said humbly.

"Hush, George," she said, holding out her hand to him. "Her you dared not ask for pardon—me you need not. When I said before that I understood, I said all, and more than all. Let's make the best of each other. We can—now that we know the worst."



A SPLENDID HAZARD

By Harold MacGrath



CHAPTER XXI.



THE Isle of Corsica, for all its fame in romance and history, is yet singularly isolated and unknown. It is an island whose people have stood still for a century, indolent, unobserving, thriftless. No smoke, that ensign of progress, hangs over her towns, which are squalid and unpicturesque, save they lie back among the mountains. But the country itself is wildly and magnificently beautiful; great mountains of granite as varied in colors as the palette of a painter, emerald streams that plunge over porphyry and marble, splendid forests of pine and birch and chestnut.

The password was, is, and ever will be, Napoleon. Speak that name, and the native's eye will fire and his patois will rattle forth and tingle the ear like a snare drum. Though he pays his tithe to France, he is Italian; but unlike the Italian of Italy, his predilection is neither for gardening, nor agriculture, nor horticulture. Nature gave him a few chestnuts, and he considers that sufficient. For the most part he subsists upon chestnut bread, stringy mutton, sinister cheeses, and a horrid sour wine. As a variety he will shoot small birds, and in the winter a wild pig or two; his toil extends no further, for his wife is the day laborer. Viewing him as he is to-day, it does not seem pos-

sible that his ancestors came from *Genova la Superba*.

Napoleon was born in Ajaccio, but the blood in his veins was Tuscan, and his mind Florentine.

These days the world takes little or no interest in the island, save for its wool, lumber, and an inferior cork. Great ships pass it on the north and south, on the east and west, but only cranky packets and dismal freighters drop anchor in her ports.

The Gulf of Ajaccio lies at the southwest of the island and is half moon in shape, with reaches of white sands, red crags, and brush-covered dunes, and immediately back of these, an embracing range of bald mountains.

A little before sunrise the yacht *Laura* swam into the gulf. The mountains, their bulks in shadowy gray, their undulating crests threaded with yellow fire, cast their images upon the smooth, tideless, silver-dulled waters. Forward, a blur of white and red marked the town.

"Isn't it glorious?" said Laura, rubbing the dew from the teak rail. "And, oh, what a time we people waste in not getting up in the mornings with the sun!"

"I don't know," replied Fitzgerald. "Scenery and sleep; of the two I prefer the latter. I have always been routed out at dawn and never allowed to turn in till midnight. You can always find scenery, but sleep is a coy thing."

"There's a drop of commercial blood

in your veins somewhere, the blood of the unromantic. But this morning?"

"Oh, sleep doesn't count at all this morning. The scenery is everything."

And as he looked into her clear, bright eyes he knew that before this singular quest came to its end he was going to tell this enchanting girl that he loved her "better than all the world," and, moreover, he intended to tell it to her with the daring hope of winning her, money or no money. Had not some poet written—some worldly-wise poet who rather had the hang of things:

He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch
To win or lose it all?

Money wasn't everything; she herself had made that statement the first night out. He had been afraid of Breitmann, but somehow that fear was all gone now. Did she care, if ever so little?

He veered his gaze round and wondered where Breitmann was. Could the man be asleep on a morn so vital as this? No, there he was, on the very bowsprit itself. The crew was busy about him, some getting the motor boat in trim, others yanking away at pulleys, all the preparations of landing. A sharp order rose now and then; a servant passed, carrying Captain Flanagan's breakfast to the pilot house. To all this subdued turmoil Breitmann seemed apparently oblivious. What mad dream was working in that brain? Did the poor devil believe in himself; or did he have some ulterior purpose, unknown to any but himself? Fitzgerald determined, once they touched land, never to let him go beyond sight. It would not be human for him to surrender any part of the treasure without making some kind of a fight for it, cunning or desperate. If only the women folk remained on board!

Breitmann gazed on toward the town, motionless.

It was difficult for Fitzgerald not to tell the great secret then and there; but his caution whispered warningly. There was no knowing what effect it would

have upon the impulsive girl at his side. And besides, there might have been a grain of selfishness in the repression. All is fair in love or war; and it would not have been politic to make a hero out of Breitmann.

"You haven't said a word for five minutes," she declared. How boyish he looked for a man of his experience!

"Silence is sometimes good for the soul," sententiously.

"Of what were you thinking?"

His heart struck hard against his breast. What an opening! What a moment in which to declare himself! But he said: "Perhaps I was thinking of breakfast. This getting up early always makes me ravenous. The smell of the captain's coffee may have had something to do with it."

"You were thinking of nothing of the sort," she cried. "I know. It was the treasure and this great-grandson of Napoleon. Sometimes I feel that I only dreamed these things. Why? Because whoever started out on a treasure quest without having thrilling adventures, shots in the dark, footsteps outside the room, villains, and all the rest of the paraphernalia? I never read or heard of such a thing."

"Nor I. But there's land yonder," he said, but without an answering smile.

"Then," in an awed whisper, "you believe something is going to happen there?"

"One thing I am certain of, but I cannot tell you just at this moment."

A bit of color came into her cheeks. As if, reading his eyes, she did not know this thing he was so certain of! Should she let him tell her? Not a real eddy in the current, unless it was his fear of money. If only she could lose her money temporarily! If only she had an ogre for a parent, now! But she hadn't. He was so dear and so kind and so proud of her that if she told him she was going to be married that morning, his only question would have been: At what time? Why, this sort of a romance was against all accepted rules. She was inordinately happy.

"There is only one thing lacking; this great-grandson himself. He will be yonder somewhere. For the man in the chimney was he or his agent."

"And aren't you afraid?"

"Of what?" proudly.

"It will not be a comedy. It is in the blood of these Napoleons that nothing shall stand in the path of their desires, neither men's lives nor woman's honor."

"I am not afraid. There is the sun at last. What a picture! And the shame of it! I am hungry!"

At half after six the yacht let go her anchor a few hundred yards from the quay. Every one was astir by now; but at the breakfast table there was one vacant chair—Breitmann's. Monsieur Ferrand and Fitzgerald exchanged significant glances. In fact, the Frenchman drank his coffee hurriedly, and excused himself. Breitmann was not on deck; neither was he in his stateroom. The door was open. Monsieur Ferrand, without any unnecessary qualms of conscience, went in. One glance at the trunk was sufficient. The lock hung down, disclosing the secret hollow. For once the secret agent's suavity forsook him, and he swore like a sailor, but softly. He rushed again to the deck and sought Captain Flanagan, who was enjoying a pipe forward.

"Captain, where is Mr. Breitmann?"

"Breitmann? Oh, he went ashore in one o' them fruit boats. Missed th' motor."

"Did he take any luggage?"

"Baggage?" corrected Captain Flanagan. "Nothin' but his hat, sir. Anythin' wrong?"

"Oh, no! We missed him at breakfast." Monsieur Ferrand turned about, painfully conscious that he had been careless.

Fitzgerald hove in sight. "Find him?"

"Ashore!" said Monsieur Ferrand, with a violent gesture.

"Isn't it time to make known who he is?"

"Not yet. It would start too many

complications. Besides, I doubt if he has the true measurements."

"There was ample time for him to make a copy."

"Perhaps."

"Monsieur Ferrand?"

"Well?"

"I've an idea, and I have had it for some time, that you wouldn't feel horribly disappointed if our friend made away with the money."

Monsieur Ferrand shrugged; then he laughed quietly.

"Well, neither would I," Fitzgerald added.

"My son, you are a man after my own heart. I was furious for the moment to think that he had outwitted me the first move. I did not want him to meet his confederates without my eye upon him. And there you have it. It is not the money, which is morally his; it is his friends, his lying, mocking friends."

"Are we fair to the admiral? He has set his heart upon this thing."

"And shall we spoil his pleasure? Let him find it out later."

"Do you know Corsica?"

"As the palm of my hand."

"But the women?"

"They will never be in the danger zone. No blood will be spilled, unless it be mine. He has no love for me, and I am his only friend, save one."

"Supposing this persecution of Germany's was only a blind?"

"My admiration for you grows, Mr. Fitzgerald. But I have dug too deeply into that end of it not to be certain that Germany has tossed this bombshell into France without holding a string to it. Did you know that Breitmann had once been hit by a spent bullet? Here," pointing to the side of his head. "He is always conscious of what he does but not of the force that makes him do it. Do you understand me? He is living in a dream, and I must wake him."

The adventurers were now ready to disembark. They took nothing but rugs and hand bags, for there would be no pruning of fine feathers on hotel verandas. With the exception of Hildegard all were eager and excited.

Her heart was heavy with forebodings. Who and what was this man Ferrand? One thing she knew; he was a menace to the man she loved; ay, with every throb of her heart and every thought of her mind.

The admiral was like a boy starting out upon his first fishing excursion. To him there existed nothing else in the world beyond a chest of money hidden somewhere in the pine forest of Aitone. He talked and laughed, pinched Laura's ears, shook Fitzgerald's shoulder, prodded Coldfield, and fussed because the motor wasn't sixty horse power.

"Father," Laura asked suddenly. "Where is Mr. Breitmänn?"

"Oh, I told him last night to go ashore early, if he would, and arrange for rooms at the Grand Hotel d' Ajaccio. He knows all about the place."

Monsieur Ferrand turned an empty face toward Fitzgerald, who laughed. The great-grandson of Napoleon, applying for hotel accommodations, as a gentleman's gentleman, and within a few blocks of the house in which this selfsame historic forebear was born! It had its comic side.

"Are there any brigands?" inquired Mrs. Coldfield. She was beginning to doubt this expedition.

"Brigands! Plenty," said the admiral. "But they are all hotel proprietors these times, those that aren't conveniently buried. From here we go to Cargésé, where we spend the night, then on to Evisa, and another night. The next morning, we shall be on the ground. Isn't that the itinerary, Fitzgerald?"

"Yes."

"And be sure to take an empty carriage to carry canned food and bottled water," supplemented Cathewe. "The native food is frightful. The first time I took the journey I was ignorant. Happily, it was in the autumn, when the chestnuts were ripe. Otherwise, I should have starved."

"And you spent a winter or spring here, Hildegard?" said Mrs. Coldfield.

"It was lovely then." There was a dream in Hildegard's eyes.

The hotel omnibus was out of service,

and they rode up to the hotel in carriages. The season was over, and under ordinary circumstances the hotel would have been closed. A certain royal family had not yet left, and this fact made the arrangements possible. It was now very warm. Dust lay everywhere, on the huge palms, on the withered plants, on the chairs and railings, and swam palpable in the air. Breitmänn was nowhere to be found, but he had seen the manager of the hotel and secured rooms facing the bay. Later, perhaps two hours after the arrival, he appeared. In this short time he had completed his plans. As he viewed them he could see no flaw.

Now, it came about that Captain Flanagan, who had not left the ship once during the journey, found his one foot aching for a touch and feel of the land. So he and Holloran, the chief engineer, came ashore a little before noon and decided to have a bite of macaroni under the shade of the palms in the Place des Palmiers. A bottle of warm beer was divided between them. The captain said laugh! as he drank it.

"Try th' native wine, capt'n," suggested the chief engineer.

"I have a picture o' Capt'n Flanagan drinkin' th' misnamed vinegar. No dago's bare fut on top o' mine, when I'm takin' a glass. An' that's th' way they make ut. This Napoleon was a fine man. He pushed 'm roun' some."

"Sure, he had Irish blood in 'im, somewhere," Holloran assented. "But I say," suddenly stretching his lean neck, "will ye look t' see who's comin' along!"

Flanagan stared. "If ut ain't that son ov a gun ov a Picard, I'll eat my hat!" The captain grew purple. "An' leavin' th' ship without orders!"

"An' th' togs!" murmured Holloran.

"Watch *me!*" said Flanagan, rising and squaring his peg.

Picard, arrayed in clean white flannels, white shoes, a panama set rakishly on his handsome head, his fingers twirling a cane, came head-on into the storm. The very jauntiness of his stride was as a red rag to the captain. So then,

a hand, heavy with righteous anger, descended upon Picard's shoulder.

"Right about face an' back t' th' ship, fast as yer legs c'n make ut!"

Picard calmly shook off the hand, and, adding a vigorous push which sent the captain staggering among the little iron tables, proceeded nonchalantly. Holloran leaped to his feet, but there was a glitter in Picard's eye that did not promise well for any rough-and-tumble fight. Picard's muscular shoulders moved off toward the vanishing point. Holloran turned to the captain, and with the assistance of a waiter, the two righted the old man.

"Do you speak English?" roared the old sailor.

"Yes, sir," respectfully.

"Who wus that?"

The waiter, in reverent tones, declared that the gentleman referred to was well known in Ajaccio, that he had spent the previous winter there, and that he was no less a person than the Duke of—. But the waiter never completed the sentence. The title was enough for the irascible Flanagan.

"Th—hell—he—is!" The captain subsided into the nearest chair, bereft of further speech, which is a deal of emphasis to put on the phrase. Picard, a duke, and only that morning his hands had been yellow with the stains of the donkey-engine oil! And by and by the question set alive his benumbed brain: What was a duke doing on the yacht *Laura*?

"Holloran, we go t' th' commodore. Th' divil's t' pay. What's a dook doin' on th' ship, an' we expectin' t' dig up gold in yonder mountains? Look alive, man; they's villainy afoot!"

Holloran's jaw sagged.

CHAPTER XXII.

"What's this you're telling me, Flanagan?" said the admiral, perturbed.

"Ask Holloran here, sir; he wus with me when th' waiter said Picard wus a dook. I've suspicioned his han's this long while, sir."

"Yes, sir; Picard it wus," averred Holloran.

"Bah! Mistaken identity."

"I'm sure, sir," insisted Holloran. "Picard has a whisker mole on 'is chin, sir, like these forriners grow, sir. Picard, sir, an' no mistake."

"But what would a duke—"

"Ay, sir; that's th' question," interrupted Flanagan, and added in a whisper: "Y' c'n buy a dozen dooks fer a couple o' million francs, sir. Th' first officer, Holloran here, an' me; nobody else knows what we're after, sir; unless you gentlemen abaft, sir, talked careless. I say 'tis serious, commodore. He knows 'what we're lookin' fer."

Holloran nudged his chief. "Tell th' commodore what we saw on th' way here."

"Picard hobnobbin' with Mr. Breitmann, sir."

Breitmann? The admiral's smile thinned and disappeared. There might be something in this. Two million francs did not appeal to him, but he realized that to others it stood for a great fortune, one worthy of hazards. He would talk this over with Cathewe and Fitzgerald and learn what they thought of the matter. If this fellow Picard was a duke and had shipped as an ordinary hand forward—Peace went out of the admiral's jaw and Flanagan's heart beat high as he saw the old war knots gather. Oh, for a row like old times! For twenty years he had fought nothing bigger than a drunken stevedore. Supposing this was the beginning of a fine rumpus? He grinned, and the admiral, noting the same, frowned. He wished he had left the women at Marseilles.

"Say nothing to any one," he warned. "But if this man Picard comes aboard again, keep him there."

"Yessir."

"That'll be all."

"What d' y' think?" asked Holloran, on the return to the Place des Palmiers, for the two were still hungry.

"Think? There's a fight, bucko!" jubilantly.

"These pleasure boats sure become monotonous." Holloran rubbed his dark hands. "When d' y' think it'll begin?"

"I wish ut wus t'day."

"I've seen y' do some fine work with th' peg."

They had really seen Picard and Breitmann talking together. The acquaintanceship might have dated from the sailing of the *Laura*, and again it mightn't. At least, Monsieur Ferrand, who overheard the major part of their conversation, later in the day, was convinced that Picard had joined the crew of the *Laura* for no other purpose than to be in touch with Breitmann. There were some details, however, which would be acceptable. He followed them to the Rue Fesch, to a *trattoria*, but entered from the rear. Monsieur Ferrand never assumed any disguises, but depended solely upon his adroitness in occupying the smallest space possible. So, while the two conspirators sat at a table on the sidewalk, Monsieur Ferrand chose his inside, under the grilled window which was directly above them.

"Everything is in readiness," said Picard.

"Thanks to you, duke."

"To-night you and your old boatman Pietro will leave for Aitone. The admiral and his party will start early to-morrow morning. No matter what may happen, he will find no drivers till morning. The drivers all understand what they are to do on the way back from Evisa. I almost came to blows with that man Flanagan. I wasn't expecting him ashore. And I could not stand the grime and jeans a minute longer. Perhaps he will believe it a case of mistaken identity. At any rate, he will not find out the truth till it's too late for him to make a disturbance. We have had wonderful luck!"

A cart rumbled past, and the listener missed a few sentences. What did the drivers understand? What was going to happen on the way back from Evisa? Surely, Breitmann did not intend that the admiral should do the work and then be held up later. The old American sailor wasn't afraid of any one, and he would shoot to kill. No, no; Breitmann meant to secure the gold alone. But the drivers worried Monsieur Ferrand. He might be forced to change his plans on their account. He wanted

full details, not puzzling components. Quiet prevailed once more.

"Women in affairs of this sort are always in the way," said Picard.

Monsieur Ferrand did not hear what Breitmann replied.

"Take my word for it," pursued Picard, "this one will trip you; and you cannot afford to trip at this stage. We are all ready to strike, man. All we want is the money. Every ten francs of it will buy a man. We leave Marseilles in your care; the rest of us will carry the word on to Lyons, Dijon, and Paris. With this unrest in the government, the army scandals, the dissatisfied employees, and the idle, we shall raise a whirlwind greater than fifty or seventy-one. We shall reach Paris with half a million men."

Again Breitmann said something lowly. Monsieur Ferrand would have liked to see his face.

"But what are you going to do with the other woman?"

Two women! Monsieur Ferrand saw the ripple widen and drew near. One woman he could not understand, but two simplified everything. The drivers and two women.

"The other?" said Breitmann. "She is of no importance."

Monsieur Ferrand shook his head.

"Oh, well; this will be your private affair. Captain Grasset will arrive from Nice to-morrow night. Two nights later we all should be on board and under way. Do you know, we have been very clever. Not a suspicion anywhere of what we are about."

"Do you recollect Monsieur Ferrand?" inquired Breitmann.

"That little fool of a butterfly hunter?"

Monsieur Ferrand smiled and gazed longingly up at the grill.

"He is no fool," abruptly. "He is a secret agent, and not one move have we made that is unknown to him."

"Impossible!"

Monsieur Ferrand could not tell whether the consternation in Picard's voice was real or assumed. He chose to believe the latter.

"And why hasn't he shown his hand?"

"He is waiting for us to show ours. But don't worry," went on Breitmann. "I have arranged to suppress him neatly."

And the possible victim murmured: "I wonder how?"

"Then we must not meet again till you return; and then, only at the little house in the Rue St. Charles."

"Agreed. Now, I must be off."

"Good luck!"

Monsieur Ferrand heard the stir of a single chair and knew that the great-grandson was leaving. The wall might have been transparent, so sure was he of the smile upon Picard's face, a sinister, speculating smile. But his imagination did not pursue Breitmann, whose lips also wore a smile, one of irony and bitterness. Neither did he hear Picard murmur "Dupe!" nor Breitmann mutter "Fools!"

When Breitmann saw Hildegard in the hotel gardens he did not avoid her, but stopped by her chair. She rose. She had been waiting all day for this moment. She must speak out or suffocate with anxiety.

"Karl, what are you going to do?"

"Nothing," unsmilingly.

"You will let the admiral find and keep this money which is yours?"

Breitmann shrugged.

"You are killing me with suspense!"

"Nonsense!" brusquely.

"You are contemplating violence of some order. I know it, I feel it!"

"Not so loud!" impatiently.

"You are!" she repeated, crushing her hands together.

"Well, all there remains to do is to tell the admiral. He will, perhaps, divide with me."

"How can you be so cruel to me? It is your safety; that is all I wish to be assured of. Oh, I am pitifully weak! I should despise you. Take this chest of money; it is yours. Go to England; to America, and be happy."

"Happy? Do you wish me to be happy?"

"God knows!"

"And you?" curiously.

"I have at no time asked you to consider me," with a clear pride. "I do not wish to see you hurt. You are courting death, Karl, death!"

"Who cares?"

"I care!" with a sob.

The bitterness in his face died for a space. "Hildegard, I'm not worth it. Forget me as some bad dream; for that is all I am or ever shall be. Marry Cathewe; I'm not blind. He will make you happy. I have made my bed, or rather certain statesmen have, and I must lie in it. If I had known what I know now," with regret, "this would not have been. But I distrusted every one, myself, too."

She understood. "Karl, had you told me all in the first place, I should have given you that diagram without question, gladly."

"Well, I am sorry. I have been a beast. Have we not always been such, from the first of us, down to me? Forget me!"

And with that, he left her standing by the side of her chair, and walked swiftly toward the hotel. When next she realized or sensed anything she was lying on her bed, her eyes dry and wide open. And she did not go down to dinner, nor did she answer the various calls upon her door.

Night rolled over the world, with a cool breeze driving under her million planets. The lights in the hotel flickered out, one by one, and in the third corridor, where the adventurers were housed, only a wick, floating in a tumbler of oil, burned dimly.

Fitzgerald had waited in the shadow for nearly an hour, and he was growing restless and tired. All day long he had been obsessed with the conviction that if Breitmann ever made a start it would be some time that night. Distinctly he heard the light rattle of a carriage. It stopped outside the gardens. He pressed close against the wall. The door to Breitmann's room opened gently and the man himself stepped out cautiously.

"So," began Fitzgerald lightly, "your majesty goes forth to-night?"

But he overreached himself. Breit-

mann whirled, and all the hate in his heart went into his arm as he struck. Fitzgerald threw up his guard, but not soon enough. The blow hit him full on the side of the head and toppled him over; and as the back of his head bumped the floor, the world came to an end. When he came to his senses his head was pillowed on a woman's knees and the scared, white face of a woman bent over his.

"What's happened?" he whispered. There were a thousand wicks, where there had been one, and these went round and round in a circle. Presently the effect wore away, and he recognized Laura. Then he remembered. "By George!"

"What is it?" she cried, the bands of terror about her heart loosening. When she found him she believed him to be dead.

"As a hero I'm a picture," he answered. "Why, I had an idea that Breitmann was off to-night to dig up the treasure himself. Gone! And only one blow struck, and I in front of it!"

"Breitmann?" exclaimed Laura. She caught her dressing gown closer about her throat.

"Yes. The temptation was too great. How did you get here?" He ought to have struggled to his feet at once, but it was very comfortable to feel her breath upon his forehead.

"I heard a fall and then some one running. Are you badly hurt?"

The anguish in her voice was as music to his ears.

"Dizzy, that's all. Better tell your father immediately. No, no; I can get up alone. I'm all right. Fine rescuer of princesses, eh?" with an unsteady laugh.

"You might have been killed!"

"Scarcely that. I tried to talk like they do in stories, with this result. The maxim is, always strike first and question afterward. You warn your father while I hunt up Ferrand and Cathewe."

Seeing that he was really uninjured she turned and flew down the dark corridor and knocked on her father's door.

Fitzgerald stumbled along toward Monsieur Ferrand's room, murmuring:

"All right, Mr. Breitmann; all right. But hang me if I don't hand you back that one with interest. Where the devil is that Frenchman?" as he hammered on Ferrand's door and obtained no response. He tried the knob. The door opened. The room was black, and he struck a match. Monsieur Ferrand, fully dressed, lay upon his bed. There was a handkerchief over his mouth, and his hands and feet were securely bound. His eyes were open.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The hunter of butterflies rubbed his released wrists and ankles, tried his collar, coughed, and dropped his legs to the floor.

"I am getting old," he said in self-commiseration; "nearsighted and old, I've worn spectacles so long in jest that now I must wear them in earnest."

"How long have you been here?" asked Fitzgerald.

"I should say about two hours. It was very simple. He came to the door. I opened it. He came in. *Zut!* He is as powerful as a lion."

"Why didn't you call?"

"I was too busy, and suddenly it became too late. Gone?"

"Yes." And Fitzgerald swore as he rubbed the side of his head. Briefly he related what had befallen him.

"You have never hunted butterflies?"

"No," sharply. "Shall we start for him while his heels are hot?"

"It is very exciting. It is the one thing I really care for. There is often danger, but it is the kind that does not steal round your back. Hereafter, I shall devote my time to butterflies. You can make believe—is that what you call it?—each butterfly is a great rascal. The more difficult the netting, the more cunning the rascal. What did you say?"

"Look here, Ferrand," cried Fitzgerald angrily. "Do you want to catch him or not? He's gone, and that means he has got the odd trick."

"But not the rubber, my son. Listen. When you set a trap for a rat or a lion, do you scare the animal into it, or do you lure him with a tempting bait? I

have laid the trap; he and his friends will walk into it. I am not a police officer. I make no arrests. My business is to avert political calamities, without any one knowing that these calamities exist. That is the real business of a secret agent. Let him dig up his fortune. Who has a better right? *Peste!* The pope will not crown him in the gardens of the Tuileries. What!" with a ring in his voice Fitzgerald had never heard before. "Am I one to be overcome without a struggle, without a call for help? The trap is set, and in forty-eight hours it will be sprung. Be calm, my son. To-night we should not find a horse or carriage in the whole town of Ajaccio."

"But what are you going to do?"

"Go to Aitone, to find a hole in the ground."

"But the admiral?"

"Let him gaze into the hole, and then tell him what you will. I owe him that much. Come on!"

"Where?"

"To the admiral, to tell him his secretary is a fine rogue, and that he has stolen the march on us. A good chase will soften his final disappointment."

"You're a strange man."

"No; only what you English and Americans call a game sport. To start on even terms with a man, to give him the odds, if necessary. What! Have beaters for my rabbits, shoot pigeons from traps? *Fi donc!*"

"Hang it!" growled the young man, undecided.

"My son; give me my way. Some day you will be glad. I will tell you this: I am playing against desperate men, and the liberty—and perhaps honor—of one you love is menaced."

"My God!"

"Sh! Ask me nothing; leave it all to me. There! They are coming. Not a word."

The admiral's fury was boundless, and his utterances were touched here and there by strong sailor expressions. The scoundrel! The blackleg! And he had trusted him without reservation. He wanted to start at once. Laura finally succeeded in calming him, and the

cold reason of Monsieur Ferrand convinced him of the folly of haste. There was a comic side to the picture, too, but they were all too serious to note it; the varied tints of the dressing gowns, the bath slippers, and bare feet; the uncovered throats; the tousled hair; the eyes still heavy with sleep. Every one of the party was in Ferrand's room, and their voices hummed and murmured, and their arms waved. Only one of them did Ferrand watch keenly: Hildegarde. How would she act now?

Fitzgerald's head still rang, and now his mind was being tortured. Laura in danger from this madman? No, over his body first, over his dead body. How often had he smiled at that phrase; but there was no melodrama in it now. Her liberty and perhaps her honor! His strong fingers worked convulsively—to put them around the blackguard's throat! And to do nothing himself, to wait upon this Frenchman's own good time, was maddening.

"Your head is all right now?" said Laura, as she turned to follow the others from the room.

"It was nothing." He forced a smile to his lips. "I'm as fit as a fiddle now; only, I'll never forgive myself for letting him go. Will you tell me one thing? Did he ever offend you in any way?"

"A woman would not call it an offense," a glint of humor in her eyes. "Real offense, no."

"He proposed to you?"

The suppressed rage in his tone would have amused if it hadn't thrilled her. "It would have been a proposal if I had not stopped it. Good night."

He could not see her eyes very well; there was only one candle burning. Impulsively he snatched at her hand and kissed it. With his life, if need be; ay, and gladly! And even as she disappeared into the corridor the thought intruded: Where was the past, the days of wandering, the active and passive adventures he had contemplated treasuring up for a club corner in his old age? Why, they had vanished from his mind as thin ice vanishes in the spring sunshine. To love is to be born again.

And Laura? She possessed a secret that terrified her one moment and enraptured her the next. And she marvelled that there was no shame in her heart. Never in all her life before had she done such a thing; she, who had gone so calmly through her young years, wondering what it was that had made men turn away from her with agony written on their faces. She would never be the same again, and the hand she held softly against her cheek would never be the same hand. Where was the tranquillity of that morning?

Fitzgerald found himself alone with Ferrand again. There was going to be no dissembling; he was going to speak frankly.

"You have evidently discovered it. Yes, I love Miss Killigrew, well enough to die for her."

"Zut! She will be as safe as in her own home. Had Breitmann not gone to-night; had any of us stopped him; I could not say. Unless you tell her, she will never know that she stood in danger. Don't you understand? If I marred one move these men intend to make, if I showed a single card, they would defeat me for the time, for they would make new plans of which I should not have the least idea. You comprehend?"

Fitzgerald nodded.

"It all lies in the hollow of my hand. Breitmann made one mistake; he should have put me off the board, into the dark. *He* knows that I know. And there he confuses me. But, I repeat, he is not vicious, only mad."

"Where will it be?"

"It will *not* be," And Monsieur Ferrand smiled as he livened up the burnt wick of his candle.

"Treachery on the part of the drivers? Oh, don't you see that you can trust me wholly?"

"Well, it will be like this." And reluctantly the secret agent outlined the plan. "Now, go to bed and sleep, for you and I shall need some to draw upon during the next three or four days. Hunting for buried treasures was never a junketing. The admiral will tell you that. At dawn!" Then he added

whimsically: "I trust we haven't disturbed the royal family below."

"Hang the royal family!"

"Their own parliament, or reichstadt, will arrange for that!" And the little man laughed.

Dawn came soon enough, yellow and airless.

"My dear," said Mrs. Coldfield, "I really wish you wouldn't go."

"But Laura and Miss von Mitter insist upon going. I can't back out now," protested Coldfield. "What are you worried about? Brigands, gunshots, and all that?"

"He will be a desperate man."

"To steal a chest full of money is one thing; to shoot a man is another. Besides, the admiral will go if he has to go alone; and I can't desert him."

"Very well. You will have to take me to Baden for nervous prostration."

"Humph! Baden; that'll mean about two thousand in fresh gowns from Vienna or Paris. All right; I'm game. But, no nerves, no Baden!"

"Go, if you will; but *do* take care of yourself; and let the admiral go *first*, when there's any sign of danger."

Coldfield chuckled. "I'll get behind him every time I think of it."

"Kiss me. They are waiting for you. And be careful."

It was only a little brave comedy. She knew this husband and partner of hers, hard-headed at times, but full of loyalty and courage; and she was confident that if danger arose the chances were he would be getting in front instead of behind the admiral. A pang touched her heart as she saw him spring into the carriage.

The admiral had argued himself hoarse about Laura's going, but he had to give in when she threatened to hire a carriage on her own account, and follow. Thus, Coldfield went because he was loyal to his friend; Laura, because she would not leave her father; Hildegard, because to remain without knowing what was happening would have driven her mad; Monsieur Ferrand, because it was a trick in the game, and Cathewe and Fitzgerald, because they loved hazards, because they

were going with the women they loved. The admiral alone went for motives apparent to all, to lay hands upon the scoundrel who had betrayed his confidence.

So the journey into the mountains began. In none of the admiral's documents was it explained why the old Frenchmen had hidden the treasure so far inland, when at any moment a call might have been made upon it. Ferrand put forward the supposition that they had been watched. As for hiding it in Corsica at all, every one understood that it was a matter of sentiment.

Fitzgerald keenly inspected the drivers, but found them of the ordinary breed, in velveteens, red sashes, and soft felt hats. As they made the noon stop, one thing struck him as peculiar. The driver of the provision carriage had little or nothing to do with his companions. "That is because *he* is mine," explained Monsieur Ferrand in a whisper. They were all capable horsemen, and on this journey spared their horses only when absolutely necessary. The great American *signori* were in a hurry.

They arrived at Cargésé at five in the afternoon. The admiral was for pushing on, driving all night. He stormed, but the drivers were obdurate. At Cargésé they would remain till sunrise; that was final. Besides, it was not safe at night, without moonshine, for many a mile of the road lipping tremendous precipices was without curb or parapet. Not a foot till dawn.

In the little *albergo*, dignified but not improved by the name of Hotel de France, there was room only for the two women and the older men. Fitzgerald and Cathewe had to bunk the best they could in a tenement at the upper end of the town; two cots in a single room, carpetless and ovenlike for the heat.

Cathewe opened his rug bag and spread out a rug in front of his cot, for he wasn't fond at any time of dirty bare boards under his feet. He began to undress silently, puffing his pipe as one unconscious of the deed. Cathewe

looked old. Fitzgerald hadn't noticed the change before, but it certainly was a fact that his face was thinner than when they put out to sea. Cathewe, his pipe still between his teeth, absently drew his shirt over his head. The pipe fell to the rug and he stamped out the coals, grumbling.

"You'll set yourself afire, one of these fine days," laughed Fitzgerald from his side of the room.

"I'm safe enough, Jack; you can't set fire to ashes, and that's about all I amount to." Cathewe got into his pajamas and sat upon the bed. "Jack, I thought I knew something about this fellow Breitmann; but it seems I've something to learn."

The younger man said nothing.

"Was that yarn of Ferrand's fact or tommyrot?"

"Fact."

"The great-grandson of Napoleon! Hm! Nothing will ever surprise me again. But why didn't he lay the matter before Killigrew, like a man?"

Fitzgerald patted and poked the wool-filled pillow, but without success. It remained as hard and uninviting as ever. "I've thought it over, Arthur. I'd have done the same as Breitmann," as if reluctant to give this due to the missing man.

"But why didn't this butterfly man tell the admiral all?"

"He had excellent reasons. He's a secret agent, and has the idea that Breitmann wants to go into France and make an emperor of himself."

"Do men dream of such things to-day, let alone try to enact them?" incredulously.

"Breitmann's an example."

"Are you taking his part?"

"No, damn him! May I ask you a pertinent question?"

"Yes."

"Did he know Miss von Mitter very well in Munich?"

"He did."

"Was he quite square?"

"I am beginning to believe that he was something between a cad and a scoundrel."

"Did you know that among her fore-

bears on her mother's side was the Abbé Fanu, who left among other things the diagram of the chimney?"

"So that was it!" Cathewe's jaws hardened.

Fitzgerald understood. Poor old Cathewe!

"Most women are fools," said Cathewe, as if reading his friend's thought. "Pick out all the brutes in history; they were always better loved than decent men. Why? God knows! Well, good night." And Cathewe blew out his candle.

So did Fitzgerald; but it was long before he fell asleep. He was straining his ears for the sound of a carriage coming down from Evisa. But none came.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Before sunup they were on the way again. They circled through magnificent gorges now, of deep red and salmon-tinted granite, storm worn, strangely hollowed out, as if some Titan's hand had been at work; and always the sudden disappearance and reappearance of the blue Mediterranean.

The two young women rode in the same carriage. Occasionally the men got down out of theirs and walked on either side of them. Whenever an abrupt turn showed forward, Fitzgerald put his hand in his pocket. From whichever way it came, he, at least, was not going to be found unprepared. Sometimes, when he heard Monsieur Ferrand's laughter drift back from the admiral's carriage, he longed to throttle the aggravating little man. Yet, his admiration for him was genuine. What a chap to have wandered round with, in the old days! He began to realize what Frenchmen must have been a hundred years gone. And the strongest part in his armor was his humanity; he wished no one ill. Gradually the weight on Fitzgerald's shoulders lightened. If Monsieur Ferrand could laugh, why not he?

"Isn't that view lovely?" exclaimed Laura, as the Capo di Rosso glowed in the sun with all the beauty of a fabu-

lous ruby. "Are you afraid at all, Hildegarde?"

"No, Laura; I am only sad. I wish we were safely on the yacht. Yes, yes; I am afraid—of something—I know not what."

"I never dreamed that he could be dishonest. He *was* a gentleman, somewhere in his past. I do not quite understand it all. The money does not interest my father so much as the mere sport of finding it. You know it was agreed to divide; his share among the officers and seamen, and the balance to our guests. It would have been such fun."

And the woman who knew everything must perforce remain silent. With what eloquence she could have defended him!

"Do you think we shall find it?" wistfully.

"No, Laura."

"How can he find his way back without passing us?"

"For a desperate man, who has thrown his all on this one chance, he will find a hundred ways of returning."

A carriage came round one of the pinnacled *colenches*. It was empty. Monsieur Ferrand casually noted the number. He was not surprised. He had been waiting for this same vehicle. It was Breitmann's, but the man driving it was not the man who had driven it out of Ajaccio. He was an Evisan. A small butterfly fluttered alongside. Monsieur Ferrand jumped out and swooped with his hat. He decided not to impart his discovery to the others. He was assured that the man from Evisa knew absolutely nothing, and that to question him would be a waste of time. At this very moment it was not unlikely that Breitmann and his confederate were crossing the mountains; perhaps with three or four sturdy donkeys, their paniers packed with precious metal. And the dupe would go straight to his fellow conspirators and share his millions. Curious old world!

They saw Evisa at sunset, one of the seven glories of the earth.

The little village rests on the side

of a mountain, nearly three thousand feet above the sea, the sea itself lying miles away to the west, V-shaped between two enormous shafts of burning granite. Even the admiral forgot his smouldering wrath.

The hotel was neat and cool, and all the cook had to do was to furnish dishes and hot water for tea. There was very little jesting, and what there was of it fell to the lot of Coldfield and the Frenchman. The spirit in them all was tense. Given his way, the admiral would have gone out that very night with lanterns.

"Folly! To find a given point in an unknown forest at night; impossible! Am I not right, Mr. Cathewe? Of course. Breitmann's man knew Aitone from his youth. Supposing," continued Monsieur Ferrand, "that we spend two days here?"

"What? Give him all that leeway?" The admiral was amazed that Monsieur Ferrand could suggest such a stupidity. "No. In the morning we make the search. If there's nothing there, we'll return at once."

Monsieur Ferrand spoke to the young woman who waited upon the table. "Please find Carlo, the driver, and bring him here."

Ten minutes later Carlo came in, hat in hand, curious.

"Carlo," began the Frenchman, leaning on his elbows, his sharp eyes boring into the mild brown ones of the Corsican. "We shall not return to Cargésé to-morrow but the day after."

"Not return to-morrow?" cried Carlo, dismayed. "Ah, but the signore does not understand. We are engaged day after to-morrow to carry a party to Bonifacio. We have promised. We must return to-morrow."

Fitzgerald saw the drift and bent forward. The admiral fumed because his Italian was an indifferent article.

"But," pursued Monsieur Ferrand, "we will pay you twenty francs the day, just the same."

"We are promised." Carlo shrugged and spread his hands, but the glitter in his questioner's eyes disquieted him.

"What's this about?" growled the admiral.

"The man says that he must take us back to-morrow, or leave us, as he has promised to return to Ajaccio to carry a party to Bonifacio," Monsieur Ferrand explained.

"Then, if we don't go to-morrow, it means a week in this forsaken hole?"

"It is possible." Monsieur Ferrand returned to Carlo once more. "We will make it forty francs per day."

"Impossible, signore!"

"Then, you will return to-morrow—without us."

Carlo's face hardened. "But——"

"Come outside with me," said Monsieur Ferrand in a tone which brooked no further argument.

The two stepped out into the hall, and when the Frenchman came back his face was animated.

"Monsieur Ferrand," said the admiral icily, "my daughter has informed me what passed between you. I must say that you have taken a deal upon yourself."

"Monsieur Ferrand is right," put in Fitzgerald.

"You, too?"

"Yes. I think the time has come for Monsieur Ferrand to offer full explanations."

The butterfly hunter resumed his chair. "They will remain, or carry us on to Corte. From there we can take the train back to Ajaccio, saving a day and a half. Admiral, I have a confession to make. It will surprise you and I offer you my apologies at once." He paused. He loved moments like this, when he could resort to the dramatic in perfect security. "I was the man in the chimney."

The admiral gasped. Laura dropped her hands to the table. Cathewe sat back stiffly. Coldfield stared. Hildegarde shaded her face with the newspaper through which she had been idly glancing.

"Patience!" as the admiral made as though to press back his chair. "Mr. Fitzgerald knew from the beginning. Is that not true?"

"It is, Monsieur Ferrand. Go on."

"Breitmann is the great-grandson of Napoleon. By this time he is traveling over some mountain pass, with his inheritance snug under his hand. You will ask, why all these subterfuges, this dodging in and out? Thus. Could I have found the secret of the chimney—I worked from memory—none of us would be here, and one of the great conspiracies of the time would have been nipped in the bud. What do you think? Breitmann proposes to go into France with the torch of anarchy in his hand; and if he does, he will be shot. He proposes to divide this money among his companions, who, with their pockets full of gold, will desert him the day he touches France. Do you recollect the scar on his temple? It was not made by a sabre; it is the mark of a bullet. He received it while a correspondent in the Balkans. Well, it left a mark upon his brain, also. That is to say, he is conscious of what he does, but not why he does it. He is a sane man with an obsession. This wound, together with the result of Germany's brutal policy toward him, and France's indifference, has made him a kind of monomaniac. You will ask why I, an accredited agent in the employ of France, have not stepped in and arrested him. My evidence might bring him to trial, but it would never convict him. Once liberated, he would begin all over again, meaning that I also would have to start in at a new beginning. So I have let him proceed to the end, and in doing so I shall save him in spite of himself. You see, I have a bit of sentiment."

Hildegarde could have reached over and kissed his hand.

"Why didn't he tell all this to me?" cried the admiral. "Why didn't he tell me? I would have helped him."

"To his death, perhaps," grimly. "For the money was only a means, not an end. The great-grandson of Napoleon—well, he will never rise from his obscurity. And some time, when the clouds lift from his brain, he will remember me. I have seen in your American cottages the mottoes hanging on the wall: 'God Bless Our Home,'

Mr. Breitmann will place my photograph beside it and smoke his cigarette in peace."

And this whimsical turn caused even the admiral to struggle with a smile. He was a square, generous old sailor. He stretched his hand across the table. Monsieur Ferrand took it, but with a shade of doubt.

"You are a good man, Monsieur Ferrand. I'm terribly disappointed. All my life have I been goose-chasing for treasures, and this one I had set my heart on. You've gone about it the best you could. If you had told me from the start there wouldn't have been any fun."

"That is it," eagerly assented Monsieur Ferrand. "Why should I spoil your innocent pleasure? For a month you have lived in a fine adventure, and no harm has befallen. And when you return to America, you will have an unrivaled story to tell; only, I do not think you will ever tell all of it. He will have paid in wretchedness and humiliation for his inheritance. And who has a better right to it? Every coin may represent a sacrifice, a deprivation; and those who gave it freely, gave it to the blood. Is it sometimes that you laugh at French sentiment?"

"Not in Frenchmen like you," said the admiral gravely.

"Good! To men of heart what matters the tongue?"

"Poor young man!" sighed Laura. "I am glad he has found it. Didn't I wish him to have it?"

"And you knew all this?" said Cathewe into the ear of the woman he loved.

Thinly the word came through her lips: "Yes."

Cathewe's chin sank into his collar and he stared at the crumbs on the cloth.

"But what meant this argument with the drivers?" asked Coldfield.

"Yes! I had forgotten that," supplemented the sailor.

"On the way back to Cargésé, we should have been stopped. We were to be suppressed till our Napoleon set sail for Marseilles."

Monsieur Ferrand bowed. He had no more to add.

The admiral shook his head. He had come to Corsica as one might go to a picnic, and here he had almost toppled over into a gulf!

The significance of the swift glance which was exchanged between Monsieur Ferrand and Fitzgerald was not translatable to Laura, who alone caught it in its transit. An idea took possession of her, but this idea had nothing to do with the glance, which she forgot almost instantly. Woman has a way with a man; she leads him whither she desires, and never is he any the wiser. She will throw obstacles in his way, or she will tear down walls that rise up before him; she will make a mile out of a rod, or turn a mountain into a molehill, and none but the Cumæan Sybil could tell why. And as Laura was of the disposition to walk down by the cemetery, to take a final view of the sea before it melted into the sky, what was more natural than that Fitzgerald should follow her? They walked on in the peace of twilight, unmindful of the curiosity of the villagers or of the play of children about their feet. The two were strangely silent; but to him it seemed that she must presently hear the thunder of his insurgent heart. At length, she paused, gazing toward the sea upon which the purples of night were rapidly deepening.

"And if I had not made that wager!" he said, following aloud his train of thought.

"And if I had not bought that statuette!" picking up the thread. If she had laughed, nothing might have happened. But her voice was low and sweet and ruminating.

The dam of his reserve broke, and the great current of life rushed over his lips, to happiness or to misery, whichever it was to be.

"I love you, and I can no more help telling you than I can help breathing. I have tried not to speak. I have so little to offer. I have been lonely so long. I did not mean to tell you here; but I've done it." He ceased, terrified. His voice had dwindled down to

a mere whisper, and finally refused to work at all.

Still she stared out to sea.

He found his voice again. "So there isn't any hope? There is some one else?" He was very miserable.

"Had there been, I should have stopped you at once."

"But——"

"Do you wish a more definite answer—John?" And only then did she turn her head.

"Yes!" his courage coming back full and strong. "I want you to tell me you love me, and while my arms are round you like this! May I kiss you?"

"No other man save my father shall."

"Ah, I haven't done anything to deserve this!"

"No?"

"I'm not even a third-rate hero."

"No?" with gentle raillery.

"Say you love me!"

"*Amo, ama, amiamo——*"

"In English; I have never heard it in English."

"So," pushing back from him, "you have heard it in Italian?"

"Laura, I didn't mean that! There was never any one else. Say it!"

So she said it softly; she repeated it, as though the utterance was as sweet to her lips as it was to his ears. And then, for the first time, she became supine in his arms. With his cheek touching the hair on her brow, they together watched, but did not see, the final conquest of the day.

"And I have had the courage to ask you to be my wife?" It was wonderful.

Napoleon, his hunted great-grandson, the treasure, all these had ceased to exist.

"John, when you lay in the corridor the other night, and I thought you were dying, I kissed you." Her arm tightened and so did his. "Will you promise never to tell if I confess a secret?"

"I promise."

"You never would have had the courage to propose if I hadn't deliberately brought you here for that purpose. It was I who proposed to you."

"I'm afraid I don't quite get that," doubtfully.

"Then we'll let the subject rest where it is. You might bring it up in after years." Her laughter was happy.

He raised his eyes reverently toward heaven. She would never know that she had stood in danger.

"But your father!" with a note of sudden alarm. And all the worldly sides to the dream burst upon him.

"Father is only the 'company,' John."

And so the admiral himself admitted when, an hour later, Fitzgerald put the affair before him, briefly and frankly.

"It is all her concern, my son, and only part of mine. My part is to see that you keep in order. I don't know; I rather expected it. Of course," said the admiral, shifting his cigar, "there's a business end to it. I'm a rich man, but Laura isn't worth a cent, in money. Young men generally get the wrong idea, that daughters of wealthy parents must also be wealthy."

He was glad to hear the young man laugh. It was a good sign.

"My earnings and my income amount to about seven thousand a year; and with an object in view, I can earn more. She says that will be plenty."

"She's a sensible girl; that ought to do to start on. But let there be no nonsense about money. Laura's happiness; that's the only thing worth considering. I used to be afraid that she might bring a duke home." It was too dark for Fitzgerald to see the twinkle in the eyes of his future father-in-law. "If worse comes to worse, why, you can be my private secretary. The job is open at present," dryly. "I've been watching you; and I'm not afraid of your father's son. When's it to be?"

"We haven't talked that over yet."

The admiral drew him down to the place beside him on the parapet and offered the second greatest gift in his possession; one of his selected perfectos.

The course of true love does not always run so smoothly. Up the road away Cathewe was grimly fighting for his happiness.

"Hildegard, forget him. Must he

spoil both our lives? Come with me, be my wife. I will make any and all sacrifices toward your contentment."

"Have we not threshed this all out before, my friend?" sadly. "Do not ask me to forget him; rather let me ask you to forget me."

"He will never be loyal to any one but himself. He is selfish to the core. Has he not proved it?" Where were the words he needed for this last defense? Where his arguments to convince her? He was losing; in his soul he knew it. If his love for her was strong, hers for this outcast was no less. "I have never wished the death of any man, but if he should die——"

She interrupted him, her hands extended as in pleading. Never had he seen a woman's face so sad. "Arthur, I have more faith in you than in any other man, and I prize your friendship above all other things. But who can say *must* to the heart? Not you, not I! Have I not fought it? Have I not striven to forget, to trample out this fire? Have you yourself not tried to banish me from your heart? Have you succeeded? Do you remember that night in Munich? My voice broke miserably, and my public career was ruined. What caused it? A note from him, saying that he had tired of the rôle and was leaving. It was not my love he wanted, after all; a slip of paper, which at any time would have been his for the asking. Arthur, my friend, when you go from me presently it will be with loathing. That night you went to his room—he lied to you."

"About what?"

"I mean, if I cannot be his wife, I cannot in honor be any man's. God pity me, but must I make it plainer?"

Here, he believed, was his last throw. "Have I not told you that nothing mattered, save that I loved you?"

"I cannot argue more," wearily.

"He will tire of you again," desperately.

"I know it. But in my heart something speaks that he will need me; and when he does I shall go to him."

"God in heaven! To be loved like that!"

Scarcely realizing the violence of his action, he crushed her to his heart roughly, and kissed her face, her eyes, her hair. She did not struggle. It was all over in a moment. Then he released her and turned away toward the dusty road. She was not angry. She understood. It was the farewell of the one man who had loved her in honor. Presently he seemed to dissolve into the shadows, and she knew that out of her life he had gone forever.

CHAPTER XXV.

The next morning Fitzgerald found Cathewe's note under his plate. He opened it with a sense of disaster.

MY DEAR OLD JACK: I'm off. Found a pony, and shall jog along to Ajaccio by the route we came. Please take my luggage back to the Grand Hotel, and I'll pick it up. And have my trunk sent ashore, too. I shan't go back to America with the admiral, bless his kindly old heart! I'm off to Mombassa. Always keep a shooting kit there for emergencies. I suppose you'll understand. Be kind to her, and help her in any way you can. I hope I shan't run into Breitmann. I should kill him out of hand. Happiness to you, my boy! And maybe I'll ship you a trophy for the wedding. Explain my departure in any way you please.

CATHEWE.

The reader folded the note and stowed it away. Somehow, the bloom was gone from things. He was very fond of Cathewe, kindly, gentle, brave, and chivalrous. What was the matter with the woman, anyhow? How to explain? The simplest way would be to state that Cathewe had gone back to Ajaccio. The why and wherefore should be left to the imagination. But, oddly enough, no one added a second question. They accepted Cathewe's defection without verbal comment. What they thought was of no immediate consequence. Fitzgerald was gloomy till that moment when Laura joined him. To her, of course, he explained the situation.

Neither she nor Hildegard cared to go up to the forest. They would find nothing but a hole. And, indeed, when the men returned from the pines, weary,

dusty, and dissatisfied, they declared that they had gone, not with the expectation of finding anything, but to certify a fact.

Monsieur Ferrand was now in a great hurry. Forty miles to Corte; night or not, they *must* make the town. There was no dissension; the spell of the little man was upon them all.

Hildegard rode alone, in the middle carriage. Such had been her desire. She did not touch her supper. And when, late at night, they entered the gates of Corte and stepped down before the hotel lights, Laura observed that Hildegard's face was streaked by the passage of many burning tears. She longed to comfort her, but the older woman held aloof.

Men rarely note these things, and when they do it has to be forced upon them. Fitzgerald, genuine in his regret for Cathewe, was otherwise at peace with the world. He alone of them all had found a treasure, the incomparable treasure of a woman's love.

Racing his horses all through the night, scouring for fresh ones at dawn and finding them, and away again, climbing, turning, climbing, round this pass, over that bridge, through this cut, thus flew Breitmann, the passion of haste upon him. By this tremendous pace, he succeeded in arriving at Evisa before the admiral had covered half the distance to Cargésé.

How clear and keen his mind was as on he rolled! A thousand plans wove themselves to the parent stem. He even laughed aloud, sending a shiver up the spine of the driver, who was certain his old *padrone* was mad. The face of Laura drifted past him as in a dream, and then again, that of the other woman. No, no; he regretted nothing, absolutely nothing. But he had been a fool there; he had wasted time and lent himself to a despicable intrigue. For all that he outcried it, there was a touch of shame on his cheeks when he remembered that, had he asked, she would have given him that scrap of paper the first hour of their meeting. Somehow, in Hildegard

von Mitter lay dormant the spirit of heroes. He had made a mistake.

Two millions of shining money—gold, silver, and English notes! And he laughed again as he recalled Monsieur Ferrand, caught in a trap. He was clever, but not clever enough. What a stroke! To make prisoners of the party on their return, to carry the girl away into the mountains! Would any of them think of treasures, of conspiracies, with her as a hostage? He thought not. In the hue and cry for her, those elements in the game would fall to a minor place. Well, he knew Monsieur Ferrand; he would call to Heaven for the safety of Laura. Love her? Yes! She was the one woman. But men did not make captives of women and obtain their love. He knew the futility of such coercion. He had committed two or three scoundrelly acts, but never would he, or could he, sink to such a level. No. He meant no harm at all. Frighten her, perhaps, and terrorize the others; and mayhap take a kiss as he left her to the coming of her friends. Nothing more serious than that.

Two millions in gold and silver and English notes! He would have his revenge for all these years of struggle and failure; for the cold and callous policies of state which had driven him to this piece of roguery. On their heads be it! Two thousand in Marseilles, ready at his beck and call; a thousand more in Avignon, in Lyons, in Dijon, and so on up to Paris, the Paris he had cursed one night from under his mansard. In a week, he would have them shaking in their boots. The unemployed, the idlers, thieves, his to a man. If he saw his own death at the end, little he cared. He would have one great moment, pay off the score, France as well as Germany. He would, at least, live to see them harrying one another's throats. To declare to France that he was only Germany's tool, put forward for the sole purpose of destroying peace in the midst of a great military crisis! He had other papers, and the prying little Frenchman had never seen these; clever forgeries, bearing the signature

of certain great German personages. These should they find at the selected moment. Let them rip each other's throat, the dogs! Two millions of francs, enough to purchase a hundred thousand men.

"Ah, my great-grandsire, if spirits have eyes, yours will see something presently. And that poor little devil of a secret agent thinks I want a crown on my head! There was a time— Curse these infernal headaches!"

On, on; hurry, hurry! The driver was faithful, a sometime brigand and later a harbor boatman; and of all his confederates this one was the only man he dared trust on an errand of this kind.

Evisa. They did not pause. They ate their supper on the way. With three Sardinian donkeys, strong and patient little brutes, with lanterns and shovels and sacks, the two fared into the pines. Aitone was all familiar ground to the Corsican, who, in younger days, had taken his illegal tithe from these hills. They found the range soon enough, but made a dozen mistakes in measurements; and it was long toward midnight, when the oil in the lanterns ran low, that their shovels bore down into the precious pocket. The earth flew. They worked like madmen, with nervous energy and power of will; and when the chest finally came into sight, rotten with age and the soak of earth, they fell back against a tree, on the verge of collapse. The hair was dank on their foreheads; their breath came harshly, almost in sobs.

Suddenly, Breitmann fell upon his knees, and, laughing hysterically, plunged his blistered hands into the shining heap. It played through his fingers in little, musical cascades. He rose.

"Pietro, you have been faithful to me. Put your two hands in there."

"I, *padrone*?" stupefied.

"Go on! As much as your two hands can hold is yours. Dig them in deep, man, dig them in!"

With a cry, Pietro dropped and burrowed into the gold and silver. A dozen times he started to withdraw his hands,

but they trembled so that some of the coins would slip and fall. At last, with one desperate plunge, the money running down toward his elbows, he turned aside and let fall his burden on the new earth outside the shallow pit. He rolled beside it, done for, in a fainting state. Breitmann laughed wildly.

"Come, come; we have no time! Put it into your pockets."

"But, *padrone*, I have not counted it!" naïvely.

"To-morrow, when we make camp for breakfast. Let us hurry."

Quickly Pietro stuffed his pockets, jabbering in his patois, swearing so many candies to the Virgin for this night's work. Then began the loading of the sacks, and these were finally dumped into the donkey panniers.

"Now, Pietro, the shortest cut to Ajaccio. First, your hand on your amulet, an oath never to reveal what has happened."

Pietro swore solemnly. "I am ready now, *padrone*!"

"Lead on, then," replied Breitmann. Impulsively, he raised his hands high above his head. "Mine, all mine!"

He wiped his face and hands, pulled his cap down firmly, lighted a cigarette, struck the rear donkey, and the hazardous journey began.

Seven men, more or less young, with a general air of dissipation about their eyes and a varied degree of recklessness lurking at the corners of their mouths; seven men sat round a table in a house in the Rue St. Charles. They had been eating and drinking rather luxuriously for Ajaccio. The Rue St. Charles is neither spacious nor elegant as a thoroughfare, but at that point where it turns into the Place Letitia it is quiet and unfrequented at night. A film of tobacco smoke wavered in and out among the guttering candles and streamed round the empty and part-empty champagne bottles. At the head of the table sat Breitmann, still pale and weary from his herculean labors. His face was immobile, but his eyes were lively.

"To-morrow," said Breitmann, "we leave for France. On board, the moneys will be equally divided. Then, for the work!" His voice was cold, authoritative.

"Two millions!" mused Picard, from behind a fresh cloud of smoke. He picked up a bottle and gravely filled his glass, beckoning to the others to follow his example. At another sign all rose to their feet, Breitmann alone remaining seated. "To the day!"

Breitmann's lips grew thinner; that was the only sign.

Outside, glancing obliquely through the grilled window, stood Monsieur Ferrand. He had not seen these worthies together before. He knew all of them. There was not a shoulder among them that he could not lay a hand upon and voice with surety the order of the law. Courage of a kind they all had, names once written gloriously in history, but now merely passports into dubious traffics. Heroes of boulevard exploits, duelists, card players; could it be possible that any sane man should be their dupe? After the strange toast, he heard many things; some he had known, some he had guessed at, and some which surprised him. Only loyalty was lacking to make them feared, indeed. Presently, he saw Breitmann rise. He was tired; he needed sleep. On the morrow, then; and in a week the first blow of the new terror. They all bowed respectfully as he passed out.

The secret agent followed him till he reached the Place des Palmiers. He put a hand on Breitmann's arm. The latter, highly keyed, swung quickly. And, seeing who it was—the man he believed to be at that moment a prisoner in the middle country—he made a sinister move toward his hip. Monsieur Ferrand was in peril, and he realized it.

"Wait a moment, monsieur; there is no need of that. I repeat, I wish you well, and this night I will prove it. What? Do you not know that I could have put my hand on you at any moment? Attend! Return with me to the house in the Rue St. Charles."

Breitmann's hand again stole toward his hip. "You were listening?"

"Yes. Be careful. My death would not change anything. I wish to disillusion you; I wish to prove to you how deeply you are the dupe of those men. All your plans have been remarkable, but not one of them has remained unknown to me. You clasp the hand of this duke who plays the sailor under the name of Picard, who hails you as a future emperor, and stabs you behind your back? How? Doubleface that he is, have I not proof that he has written detail after detail of this conspiracy to the Quai d'Orsay, and that he has clung to you only to gain his share of what is yours? *Zut!* Come back with me, and let your own ears testify. The fact that I am not in the mountains should convince you how strong I am."

Breitmann hesitated, wondering whether he had best shoot this meddler then and there and cut for it, or follow him.

"I will go with you. But I give you this warning: If what I hear is not what you expect me to hear, I promise to put a bullet into your meddling head."

"I agree to that," replied the other. He did not underestimate his danger; neither did he undervalue his intimate knowledge of human nature.

With what emotions Breitmann returned to the scene of his triumph, his self-appointed companion could only surmise. He had determined to save this young fool, in spite of his madness, and never had he failed to bring his enterprises to their forearranged end. And there was sentiment beneath all this, sentiment he would not have been ashamed to avow. Upon chance, then, fickle, inconstant chance, depended the success of seven years' labor. If by this time the wine had not loosened their tongues, or if they had dispersed!

But fortune favors the persistent no less than the brave. The profligates were still at the table, and there were fresh bottles of wine. They were laughing and talking. In all, not more than fifteen minutes had elapsed since

Breitmann's departure. Monsieur Ferrand stationed him by the window, and kept a hand lightly upon his arm, as one might place a finger on a pulse.

Of what were they talking? Ostend. Ballet dancers. The races in May. The shooting at Monte Carlo. Gaming tables. Empty purses. And again ballet dancers.

"To divide two millions!" cried one. "That will clear my debts, with a little for Dieppe."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand francs! Princely!"

And then the voice of the master spirit, pitiless, ironical; Picard's. "Was there ever such a dupe? And not to laugh in his face is penance for my sins. A Dutchman, a bullet-headed clod from Bavaria, the land of sausage, beer, and dachshunds; and this shall be written Napoleon IV.! Ye gods, what farce, comedy, vaudeville! But, there was always that hope: If he found the money he would divide it. So, kotow, kotow! Opera bouffe!"

Breitmann shuddered. Monsieur Ferrand, feeling that shudder under his hand, relaxed his shoulders. He had won!

"An empire! Will you believe it?"

"I suggest the eagle rampant on a sausage!"

"No, no; the lily on the beer pot!"

The scene went on. The butt of it heard jest and ridicule. They were pillorying him with the light and matchless cruelty of wits. And he, poor fool, had believed them to be *his* dupes, whereas he was *theirs!* Gently he disengaged himself from Monsieur Ferrand's grasp.

"What are you going to do?" whispered the hunter of butterflies.

"Watch and see."

Breitmann walked noiselessly round to the entrance, and Monsieur Ferrand lost sight of him for a few moments. Picard was on his feet again, mimicking his dupe by assuming a Napoleonic pose. The door opened, and Breitmann stood quietly on the threshold. A hush fell upon the revelers. There was something kingly in the contempt with which Breitmann swept the star-

tled faces. He stepped up to the table, took up a full glass of wine, and threw it into Picard's face.

"Only one of us shall leave Corsica," said the dupe.

"Certainly it will not be your majesty," replied Picard, wiping his face with a serviette. "His majesty will waive his rights to meet me. To-morrow morning I shall have the pleasure of writing finis to this Napoleonic phase. You fool, you shall die for that!"

"That," returned Breitmann, still unruffled as he went to the door, "remains to be seen. Gentlemen, I regret to say that your monetary difficulties must continue unchanged."

"Oh, for fifty years ago!" murmured the little sceneshifter from the dark of his shelter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It took place on the road which runs from Ajaccio to the Cap de la Parata, not far from the Iles Sanguinaires; not a main-traveled road. The sun had not yet crossed the mountains, but a crisp, gray light lay over land and sea. They fired at the same time. The duke lowered his pistol, and through the smoke he saw Breitmann pitch headforemost into the thick white dust. Presently, nay, almost instantly, the dust at the left side of the stricken man became a creeping blackness. The surgeon sprang forward.

"Dead?" asked Picard.

"No; through the shoulder. He has a fighting chance."

"The wine, last night; my hand wasn't steady enough. Some day the fool will curse me as a poor shot. The devil take the business! Not a sou for my pocket, out of all the trouble I have had. But for the want of a clear head I should be a rich man to-day. Who thought he would come back?"

"I did," answered Monsieur Ferrand.

"You?"

"With pleasure! I brought him back; thank me for your empty pockets, monsieur. If I were you I should not land at Marseilles. Try Livarno, by all means; Livarno."

"For this?" asked Picard, with a jerk of his head toward Breitmann, who was being carefully lifted onto the carriage seat.

"No; for certain letters you have *not* sent to the Quai d'Orsay. You comprehend?"

"What do you mean?" truculently; for Picard was not in a kindly mood this morning.

But the little Bayard of the Quai laughed. "Shall I explain here, monsieur? Be wise. Go to Italy, all of you. This time you overreached, Monsieur le Duc. Your ballet dancers must wait." And, with rare insolence, Monsieur Ferrand showed his back to his audience, climbed to the seat by the driver, and bade him return slowly to the Grand Hotel.

Hildegarde refused to see any one but Monsieur Ferrand. Hour after hour she sat by the bed of the injured man. Knowing that, in all probability, he would live, she was happy for the first time in years. He needed her; alone, broken, wrecked among his dreams, he needed her. He had recovered consciousness almost at once, and his first words were a curse on the man who had aimed so badly. He could talk but little, but he declared that he would rip the bandages if they did not prop his pillows, so he could see the bay. The second time he woke he saw Hildegarde. She smiled bravely, but he turned his head aside.

"Has the yacht gone yet?"

"No."

"When will it sail?"

"To-morrow." Her heart swelled with bitter pain. The woman he loved would be on that yacht. But toward Laura she held nothing but kindness, tinged with a wondering envy. Was not she, Hildegarde, as beautiful? Had Laura more talents than she, more accomplishments? Alas, yes; one! She had had the unconscious power of making this man love her.

To and fro she waved the fan. For a while, at any rate, he would be hers. And when Monsieur Ferrand said that the others wished to say farewell, she declined. She could look none of them

in the face again, nor did she care. She was sorry for Cathewe. His life would be as broken as hers; but a man has the world under his feet, scenes of action, changes to soothe his heart; a woman has little else but her needle.

All through the day and all through the night, she remained on guard, surrendering her vigil only to Monsieur Ferrand. With cold cloths, she kept down the fever, wiping his hot face and hands. He would pull through, the surgeon said, but he would have his nurse to thank. There was something about the man he did not understand; he acted as if he did not care to live.

The morning found her still at her post. Breitmann awoke early, and appeared to take a little interest in his surroundings.

"Why do you waste your time?" His voice was colorless.

"I am not wasting my time, Karl."

His head rolled slowly over on the pillow till he could see outside. Only two or three fishing boats were visible.

"When will the yacht sail?"

"Always that question! 'Go to sleep. I will wake you when I see it.'"

"I've been a scoundrel, Hildegard." And he closed his eyes.

Where would she go when he left this room? For the future was always rising up with this question. What would she do, how would she live? She, too, shut her eyes.

The door opened. The visitor was Monsieur Ferrand. He touched his lips with a finger, and stole toward the bed.

"Better?"

She nodded.

"Are you not dead for sleep?"

"It does not matter."

Breitmann's eyes opened, for his brain was wide awake. "Ferrand?"

"Yes. They wished me to say good-bye for them."

"To me?" incredulously.

"They have none but good wishes."

"She will never know?"

"Not unless Mr. Fitzgerald tells her."

"Hildegard, I had planned her abduction. Don't misunderstand. I have

sunk low, indeed, but not so low as that. I wanted to harry them. They would have left *me* free. She was to be a pawn. I shouldn't have hurt her."

"You do not care to return to Germany?"

"Nor to France, Monsieur Ferrand."

"There's a wide world outside. You will find room enough," diffidently.

"An outlaw?"

"Of a kind."

"Be easy. I haven't even the wish to be buried there. There is more to the story, more than you know. My name is Hermann Stüler—if I live. There is not a drop of French blood in my veins. Breitmann died on the field in the Soudan, and I took his papers." His eyes burned into Ferrand's.

"Perhaps that would be the best way," replied Monsieur Ferrand pensively.

"What shall I do with the money? It is under the bed."

"Keep it. No one will contest your right to it—Hermann Stüler; and, besides, your French, fluent as it is, still possesses the Teutonic burr. Yes, Hermann Stüler; very good, indeed."

Hildegard eyed them in wonder. Were they both mad?

"Will you be sure always to remember?" said Monsieur Ferrand to the bewildered woman. "Hermann Stüler. Karl Breitmann, who was the great-grandson of Napoleon, died of a gunshot in Africa. If you will always remember that, why, even Paris will be possible some day."

Hildegard was beginning to understand. She was coming to bless this little man.

"I do not believe that the money under the bed is safe there. I shall, if you wish, make arrangements with the local agents of the Crédit Lyonnais to take over the sum, *without question*, and to issue you two drafts, one on London and the other on New York, or in two letters of credit. Two millions; it is a big sum to let repose under one's bed, anywhere, let alone Corsica,

where that amount might purchase half the island."

"I am, then, a rich man; no more mansards, no more stale bread and cheap tobacco, no more turning my cuffs and collars and clipping the frayed edges of my trousers. I am fortunate. There is a joke, too. Picard and his friends advanced me five thousand francs for the enterprise."

"I marvel where they got it!"

"I am sorry that I was rough with you."

"I bear you not the slightest ill will. I never have. Hermann Stüler; I must remember to have them make out the drafts in that name."

Breitmann appeared to be sleeping again. After waiting a moment or two, his guardian angel tiptoed out.

An hour went by.

"Hildegarde, have you any money?"

"Enough for my needs."

"Will you take half of it?"

"Karl!"

"Will you?"

"No!"

He accepted this as final. And immediately his gaze became fixed upon the bay. A sleek white ship was putting out to sea.

"They are leaving, Karl," she said, and the courage in her eyes beat down the pain in her heart.

"In my coat, inside; bring them to me." As he could move only his right arm, and that but painfully, he bade her open each paper, and hold it so that he could read plainly. The scrawl of the Great Captain; a deed and a title; some dust dropping from the worn folds. How he strained his eyes upon them! He could not help the swift intake of air, and the stab which pierced his shoulder made him faint. She began to refold them. "No," he whispered. "Tear them up, tear them up!"

"Why, Karl!"

"Tear them up, now, at once! I shall never look at them again. Do it! What does it matter? I am only Hermann Stüler. Now!"

With shaking fingers, she ripped the tattered sheets, and the tears ran over and down her cheeks. It could not have hurt her more had she tore the man's heart in twain. He watched her with fevered eyes till the last scrap floated into her lap.

"Now, toss them into the grate, and light a match."

And when he saw the reflected glare on the opposite wall, he sank deeper into his pillow. The woman was openly sobbing. She came back to his side, knelt, and laid her lips upon his hand. There was now only a dim white speck on the horizon, and with that strange sea magic, the hull suddenly dipped down, and naught but a trail of smoke remained. Then this, too, vanished. Breitmann withdrew his hand, but he laid it upon her head.

"I am a broken man, Hildegarde; and in my madness I have been something of a rascal. But for all that, I had big dreams. And thus they go, the one in flames and the other out to sea." He stroked her hair. "Will you take what is left? Will you share with me the outland, the life of a disappointed outcast? Will you?"

"Would I not follow you to any land? Would I not share with you any misery? Have you ever doubted the strength of my love?"

"Knowing that there was another?"

"Knowing even that."

"It is I who am little and you who are great. Hildegarde, we'll have our friend Ferrand seek a priest this afternoon and square accounts."

Her head dropped to the coverlet.

After that there was no sound except the crisp metallic rattle of the palms in the freshening breeze.

THE END.



MRS.
ROLAND'S OLIVER
BY JANE W. GUTHRIE



JUST read that!" Mrs. Roland walked into her husband's sitting room as she spoke, and, standing beside the couch upon which he was lying indulging himself in a cold, she held out to him a folded square of white note paper, as if it were bacteria-infected material, while her small, dark face, expressive of extreme disgust, asked advice and counsel. "Another regret—Mrs. Chatwyn. 'So sorry, dear Mrs. Roland,'" she read, with sarcastic emphasis, "'that I shall have to ask you to supply our places, since my husband has been called out of town on business, and I am ill with a cold.'"

"I feel for her," croaked Roland sympathetically.

"But what am I going to do?" his wife questioned plaintively. "It's horrid having two tables of bridge thrown out this way. Mrs. Chatwyn is guilty of a social crime," she asserted indignantly. "All of the invitations that I sent out two weeks ago were accepted, and then, one by one, the people began to make excuses and send regrets. First this one and then that one, and I've supplied and supplied until there is no one else to be secured. Do you—do you think," looking dubiously at him, "that you will be able to help me out? You are a delinquent."

"I will not," he asserted positively if hoarsely. "You will have to get some one else."

"How can I?" she wailed, sitting down on the arm of a chair dejectedly. "It's only one table that I am bothered about. I can't arrange for the Aldens.

I have had to ask the Ortons to supply, and they don't speak to the Aldens; and you know"—she sighed mournfully—"how all those people behave if they think they have been slighted in any way. I have still two vacant places, and there is no one left to ask." Her voice trailed off dolefully.

Roland laid aside his book reluctantly, put his hands back of his head, and considered a moment. "I might send down to the office and get Miss Wilkins, one of the stenographers there. I understand that she is a bridge fiend."

"Yes—yes!" Amy Roland's face brightened. "But that still leaves one place to fill."

Roland turned and picked up his interrupted book with a bored air of being above such trifling involvements. His manner was calculated to try the patience of any wife; and the hoarse rasp of his voice had a power to exasperate nerves already on edge.

"If you will try to have bridge parties"—he threw out his hands as if casting off any personal responsibility in the matter—"you must expect to bear the consequences."

The virtue of a self, aloof from petty social stress, was easily detected in his superior smile. Men always find food for irony in the social complications of their wives, Amy reflected, as she gazed half-tearfully, half-resentfully through the window. Occasions when this seeks expression resolve themselves into matrimonial infelicities.

"I seem to recall the story of a similar occurrence"—Roland's lips concealed suppressed laughter, his eyebrows wavered slightly, while far back in his eyes as he gazed at his wife was

an amused twinkle which did not escape her observation—"and the host, on that occasion, sent out to the highways and hedges and compelled supplies to come in. You might"—his voice trembled with laughter as he croaked out the words—"follow an illustrious precedent."

Mrs. Roland, who had turned hopefully toward her husband, impatiently presented a scornful shoulder to him now and resumed her perplexed stare out of the window; yet, as she rose to leave the room, she gave a little shiver of apprehension, and answered his teasing suggestion.

"I'd like to," she said, adding: "But I grow cold all over when I remember how those people behave if they find themselves put off with any makeshift supplies." As she got to the door, she looked back dejectedly. "Can't you suggest some one?" she queried mournfully.

"I have given you the best suggestion that I can offer." Roland grinned expressively as he dropped his eyes again to his book.

"Oh, very well. If that's the best you can do—"

Amy's feelings were beyond words. Alfred had a cold, that was apparent, but there had been occasions when neither cold nor any other physical drawback had interfered with amusements that he had on hand, and it did seem— By way of consolation she walked to the windows of her own room to look dispiritedly upon the afternoon out of doors. The sun was spinning glistening, cobwebby veils out of the frost-laden atmosphere to wrap about tall towers and buildings, giving solid stone structures the ethereal, evanescent aspect of a dream, while it made of the freshly fallen snow a diamond-encrusted garment which glittered and gleamed upon trees and houses and roadways, an allurements, a fascination, and a call.

Suddenly, she decided to go out, and, ordering her limousine, she hastily got herself into a short, dark-blue "trotteur" with wide bands of fur and an enveloping stole and muff which almost

hid her small figure. Standing for a moment on the steps, gazing down the avenue, where an army of snow shovelers was scraping the streets, forming every here and there groups that gave a certain picturesque value to the glittering roadway stretching in a white line as far as her eyes could see, she hesitated, and then waving her hand toward the waiting machine, a movement which the driver understood meant that he was to follow her and pick her up when she wished, she walked off at a brisk pace.

An hour afterward she was back home again, her face glowing with excitement and suppressed eagerness, as she hurried to her husband's room; but, to her disappointment, he was asleep. Later, however, before dinner, she found him awake and secured an opportunity to deliver the communication which had been burning on the tip of her tongue.

This time she moved toward the couch, her eyes shining, her lips curved in a happy smile. She was a dainty little creature, and she wore now a clinging yellow dinner gown which served to emphasize the soft dusk of her skin, the shadowy brown of her hair; to accent the slender, pointed oval of her face, and reflect itself in her large brown eyes gleaming now like stars.

"I took your advice," she announced in a gentle, demure voice, which conceded wifely obedience the first law of matrimony, as she leaned down and took her husband's hand between her own two soft, cool ones in a little gesture of affection.

"My advice?" he echoed in a hoarse whisper as he looked her over admiringly. "My advice?" perplexedly.

"Yes," she assured him, bearing the aspect of an obedient child seeking its reward. "I compelled one man to come in."

Roland stared at her. He had forgotten the conversation of the afternoon. He was a bit feverish, tired of confinement, and inclined to be irritable.

"Yes—you know"—the voice was more gentle, more blandly deferential

—"you suggested this afternoon that I follow an illustrious precedent, and go out to the highways and hedges and compel my supplies to come in. I did."

Roland raised himself on his elbow, his ruffled hair standing around his head like the feathers of a disturbed bird; then he sat up, tossing aside the *couvre-pied* with sharp precision, and in a voice dominated by lack of comprehension yet satirically shrill, he said:

"If you will just explain yourself, I may be able to grasp your enigmatical communication."

Amy sat down on the extreme edge of a chair, like a small, bright bird poised for flight, willing it seemed to offer a concession to explanation.

"You seem to forget"—she spoke agrievedly—"that you urged me to take an unusual but very interesting means of supplying places for my bridge tables to-morrow evening. Of course"—disappointed—"if you chose to disclaim your advice and deny that you urged me to follow it when I came to you this afternoon seeking help and counsel, then—of course"—she spread out her hands—"I must assume that I misunderstood you." She gazed up at him with drooped corners of the mouth. "And he's here in the house."

Roland moved over and put his arm upon the mantelpiece as a moral support. Women, he assured himself at this juncture, could take more ways to devil a man than a cat can compass with a mouse. He remembered what Amy meant. He knew well enough, but as he looked at his wife's withheld smile, her shining eyes, and her deferential attitude of having accomplished something that would please him, he failed to understand what she was driving at. He'd be hanged, he assured himself, if he knew whether Amy were joking or in earnest.

"Who is it?" he asked in a flat voice devoid of expression. Should a man provide amusement for his wife's mistaken sense of humor?

"A man who was standing watching the snow shovelers at work, and evidently longing to be at it himself. A tramp, I should judge."

"And you brought him into the house?" The pleased conviction of his wife's mental incapacity reflected itself in Roland's voice and manner.

She nodded her head in delighted recognition of his perspicacity.

"Where have you put him?" The judge upon the bench questioning a hardy criminal was the only fitting similitude for Roland at this moment.

"He's probably at the present time in the front room getting ready for dinner."

In the varying emotions that swept across her husband's face at this statement, nothing to Amy so clearly presented itself as the impulse of an irate parent to chastise a child; yet Roland's voice endeavored to convince her that he was withholding judgment, seeking to be forbearing.

"I suppose," he stated questioningly, "that you are aware that I use that room in summer when I am in town, and that most of my clothes and belongings are in there?"

"Yes," she nodded. "That's why I put him in there. He'll need to wear something of yours to-morrow night. He didn't look, poor fellow, as if he had anything of his own."

Roland began to walk restlessly about the room. "I suppose," he hazarded, with icy sarcasm, "that you picked an expert 'inside' man, a sneak thief."

"You're apt to get that kind," Amy grieved mildly, "if you go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in. And I really had to compel him. He didn't want to come. I suppose"—she seemed to suggest lack of any personal involvement in the situation, having merely carried out his wishes—"that he'll be able to wear your clothes to-morrow night. That was the reason that I chose him; he looked so much like you. It was the thing of all others that attracted me," she said sweetly, with an adorable smile upon her lips.

Roland stopped abruptly in his restless pacing, and stared at his wife. That demure air of having made an effort to please him was most exasperating. Of course he knew that Amy was getting

back at him somehow for teasing her that afternoon; but good heavens, a tramp in the house! And the worst of it was, that she was perfectly capable of doing just such a thing. To save himself, he couldn't tell whether she was teasing or telling him actual facts. He wished bridge parties were at the bottom of the sea. They were at best a contrivance of Satan for trying the patience, not only of those who indulged in them, but every one who came within the radius of their deadly influence. He ran his hands through his hair; beads of perspiration stood out on his face.

"I think," he said, with cold precision, "that if you would just arrange to have some one come into the house for the night and guard it and us, it would be well." He meant this as a tactful effort to induce his wife to further discussion, but it failed.

"Just as you say, dear," she replied, with sweet deference. "If you would feel safer——"

She left the matter entirely in his hands. Then she came over, put her arms around his neck, and kissed him tenderly, a caress which at best he could only receive now with a gruff disdain.

"Will you dine with me and the tramp, or have your dinner here alone?" she asked, with that soothing solicitude one uses in speaking to a sick and petulant child.

"I prefer to dine alone," Roland asserted curtly, and was furious at himself a moment afterward, because in doing so he had left his curiosity ungratified. Yet he could not help laughing, grim though his mirth was, when Amy, slipping through the doorway, smiled back at him and threw him a kiss, that somehow, in gay deviltry, summed up the situation.

Women, Roland reflected, as he stood looking at the doorway through which his wife had just passed, seem to have some diabolical instinct for twisting one's speech, even the plainest and most simple words. If ever Amy caught him giving her advice again he'd know it. A strange tramp in the house—

sleeping in his bed—wearing his clothes! And the worst of it was that Amy was perfectly capable of doing just that thing. Well—if she could stand it, he could.

But if Roland found it hard to puzzle out the situation, the man in the front room was having an equally interesting mental bout with himself. Looking at himself from every point of view, he was forced to accept himself as an adventurer. As Brian Gilbert in Madison Square Park, out of a situation, on a bitter, snowy afternoon in the middle of a New York winter, contemplating offering himself to the devil at bargain prices, convinced though he was that not even Satan himself would look upon him as a lucky venture, he was of no value to the world at large; but as Brian Gilbert, kidnapped by an unknown woman, lured to a waiting limousine, and whisked to her home without even the consoling offices of social bell, book, or candle, he was possessed of dramatic value, if nothing else; at least, another man's tea and prospective dinner and bed were influences to dispel morbid designs upon life, liberty, or the pursuit of unhappiness.

Nor was Gilbert accepting these accompaniments of a larger wealth than his own, in the humble, grateful spirit which might seem becoming in one who only a few hours previous had been lacking a room and bath, food and occupation; but so liberally constructive is imagination, that having spent an unusually agreeable hour or two studying bridge problems and bridge effects with his kidnapping hostess, he was now, as a preparation for dinner, moving about the other man's room with a certain expansive opulence in his very walk, a glow of satisfaction on his face, which might hint that he felt himself not unfit for these surroundings. Hope has a way of brushing aside apparently insurmountable obstacles by just such summary proceedings, now and then.

It had helped to restore his self-respect that he had been able to refrain from snatching at the hot tea brought in to them immediately after entering

the house, since hot tea had been to him what champagne would have been to a better-fed man; and by reason of its staying qualities, he felt that he would be able to restrain any wolfish tendency to bolt rich food at the dinner table, and to converse understandingly, though his senses swam at the very thought of once more dining respectably.

As he moved up and down the room a tall, dark fellow, with a set, somewhat inscrutable face, he was indeed painfully thin and worn from a prolonged struggle with the forces of adversity. He had been recalled from South America, where he had been building a railroad, by the bankruptcy of the company financing the project. Unable to collect long arrears of salary and a personal output that had drained his own resources, he had found himself at the beginning of a period of business depression with every avenue apparently closed against any effort. He had never faced such a situation before in his life, for fortune had hitherto been good to him, but though friends interested themselves, perhaps even they were influenced to lukewarmness considering his persistent ill luck.

Adversity had evidently picked him for trial as testing his fibre; and the worst of it was that the girl to whom he was engaged had not yet been told of all of the disaster that had flung itself in his way. He had no inclination to pose before her as a failure. For two weeks he had not seen her, giving her to understand that he had been called out of town on business.

He had been standing in the small park watching the snow shovelers, and had made up his mind to apply the next morning for a position among them. Food and lodgings were grim necessities at this season of the year. But as he stood looking at them, the world seemed to whirl away from him, and a girl's reproachful face appealed to him. He threw up his head with a quick little gesture of despair, and squared his shoulders again. Gilbert carried his shoulders with a certain distinction of manner that almost any woman would

notice, and as he gave that quick little movement of ordering his personal devil aside, the devil of adversity walking close by him and filling his ears with sinister whispers, he failed to notice a small, dark woman wrapped in luxurious furs who had stopped a moment, attracted by that quick, shivering gesture of his shoulders. Nor did he see that she walked about him two or three times, viewing him from every angle.

Dusk was sending out its first intimations of night, creating a pale, ethereal rose radiance which, casting its lovely glow over the snow, wrapped the tall buildings and towers in opal tints, while it gave the enchantment of distance to vistas of intersecting avenues, down the long lines of which the night lamps shone now like swinging strings of pallid moons. A rising wind was sweeping through these avenues, blowing flurries of snow in one's face and shaking miniature avalanches from surrounding trees and buildings. Night and the wind! Again Gilbert shivered. He must seek a lodging. That morning he had given up a comparatively comfortable one.

But a voice at his side was speaking to him. He looked down to find, just at his elbow, a small, dark woman so wrapped in furs that he could scarcely see her face, though her eyes shone up at him and appealed to him. She spoke plaintively:

"Won't you help me to find my motor? It is somewhere just about here, and I can't see in this wind. I think the man went up that way," indicating one of the avenues.

It was with something of a shock that Gilbert came back from his land of adversity. Indeed, he had almost resented the fact that a woman with a voice like that, and referring with the ease of custom to motor cars, should speak to him; but the note of pleading in the voice brought him to himself, and, under her directions, he found the car and the man, who had no appearance of being lost, and brought them to the curb, where she stood, and, opening the door of the limousine, helped her in.

"You will come with me?" There was a note of insistence in the voice now, a voice which woke dim echoes of a past that had been swept away from him. Was it that it sounded like the voice of that girl whose face haunted him? All voices sounded like hers. He stared at the woman who gave the invitation.

"You will do me a great favor if you will."

Again he stared at her in an abandonment of surprise.

"I assure you that I mean it. Please." She held the door open. Gilbert stepped into the limousine.

Considering this abrupt capture of a guest, and her husband's initial reception of her announcement of it, Amy Roland experienced a grateful surprise when, after dinner, Roland sent for her, and suggested pleasantly that she invite the tramp to come to his sitting room to have some tobacco with him. It was with alacrity that she had the invitation sent to Gilbert, and stayed waiting a few seconds with an unquenchable curiosity to watch the meeting between the two men.

Roland was standing on the hearth-rug with his back to the wood fire, a truly impregnable position for one who is about to engage in an examination of candidates for favor, or read the lines between statements of social complexity. He was a tall, dark man of about thirty-eight years of age, with a certain gravity of aspect which belied a lively sense of humor, an intuitive capacity for reading people and their motives, and a cultivated capacity for using them to his own advantage. Just now he looked up from under his rather heavy dark eyebrows with a piercingly keen glance at the man who entered the room in a shabby suit of tweeds, worn, however, with a certain distinction, a man about thirty-one or two years old, but whose self-possession and dignity, whose perfectly inscrutable face, and whose manner of inquiry gave him a certain mastery of the situation.

Instantly Roland took a fancy to him, put his own cigarette case at his dis-

posal; and, to Amy's satisfaction, the two entered upon those masculine fields of personal investigation to which no woman may find her way.

Busy the next morning giving orders for her bridge party, and with a luncheon engagement on hand, it was with lively satisfaction that she understood that Roland and her involuntary guest were again smoking in her husband's sitting room. No feminine tactfulness, diplomacy, or interference were needed, apparently, for which she was devoutly thankful, and, as she passed through the hall about eleven o'clock, she observed her husband standing upon the hearth-rug, facing the door, listening absorbedly to the younger man, who was sitting in a chair talking, his back to the door.

As she caught her husband's eye, she enacted a vividly descriptive pantomime of an expert "inside" man going through Roland's pockets, relieving him of his watch, jewelry, even his clothes. All of which, though Roland saw, for he could not help seeing it, he refused to acknowledge with the slightest twitching of the lips. With a hasty, but malicious, little bow and *pas seul* to complete the elfish performance, she tripped away.

When she returned in the late afternoon, they were still smoking companionably, the tables were littered with maps and books of reference, and the two had evidently been far afield in engrossing conversation. Roland was a man of affairs, not only through inheritance, but by his own effort, and by what he deemed now a rare chance, since he had the leisure to devote to investigation in his enforced quiet at home, he had come across the very man for whom he had been looking long; and he and Gilbert had been traveling the paths of each other's experiences and each other's aims, to find that they led to similar if not the same goals; one a worker, a practical man to carry out the dreams and opportunities of the other.

"Did you get Miss Wilkins to come?" Mrs. Roland queried rather anxiously as she entered the room. "I

forgot to remind you of it before I went out."

"Did you ever know me to forget you or your requests?" her husband asked her, with reproachful gallantry.

Yet that evening, to her infinite surprise, no Miss Wilkins put in an appearance. Instead, a strange young woman was counted among those present—a small, young woman, not unlike Amy in appearance, excepting that her hair was light and her eyes were blue. Mrs. Roland first saw her as she advanced down the long hall toward the drawing-room, and though Gilbert was with her, hovering over her like a guardian angel, she seemed to present to her hostess some bewildering effect of phantasmagoria.

This girl, this stranger upon whom she had never laid eyes before, was wearing one of her—of Amy Roland's gowns. She knew it the instant her eyes fell upon it. It had only come home a day or two before, and she had meant it to be the cap and climax of her winter wardrobe. She had had it especially designed; and now it was advancing to her on a strange young woman, whose self-possessed manner gave her the assurance of a welcome guest.

"So glad, Mrs. Roland, to be able to help you out. Mr. Roland telephoned to father, and asked if I could supply for you, and I was only too delighted to come when I learned that Brian was your guest." She smiled back over her shoulder at Gilbert so adorably that Amy was perforce obliged to join her.

So Alfred had had a hand in this! This was Alfred's doing! What a busy day he must have had! But who was this girl who wore her gowns and claimed Brian Gilbert as her own? How had Alfred induced her to come here, and how had he induced her to wear that gown? She couldn't ask the girl her name, since the stranger seemed to consider herself well known, and assumed that she was not only welcome, but known to her hostess.

All evening Amy watched her, scanning that gown with jealous eye. She could hardly keep her mind on her

game; but no such consideration apparently disturbed either Gilbert or the predatory young woman. As far as highway and hedges supplies could possibly be, they were successes—both of them; and, judging from the sound from their table, they seemed to play good bridge.

Amy laughed to herself. That was why Alfred had been in such a good humor. That was why he had been anxious to have "the tramp" come to his room—that he might in some way turn the tables on her. Alfred was very ingenious. Again she smiled to herself. There was still reprisal. It would never do to let a husband, a mere husband, have the last word—that would indeed be unfeminine; and she had never intended that he should.

Her bridge party passed off successfully; that was a comfort, she felt, as she saw the last of the guests leave the house. No, not the last, for over in one corner of the drawing-room, near a sheltering curtain, the strange young woman and Brian Gilbert were engaged in an absorbed conversation. Amy, slipping off upstairs to see her husband, caught a glimpse of them as they drew farther and farther back into a curtain.

"Well, Alfred," she said blandly, as she entered her husband's room, "your dress suit and my best gown are downstairs in each other's arms."

"I told you he'd steal something," Roland remarked sententiously, without a quiver of mirth upon his face, though he looked up curiously to see how Amy was going to take the despoiling of her wardrobe. Yet Amy made no sign; she merely said slyly:

"So you arranged that he should. Collusion is always questionable, if not punishable."

"Now look here, Amy," admonished Roland, with an eye to future involvements, deeming that the time had come for husbandly advice. "This time your little joke turned out all right. I happened to know the father of the girl to whom Gilbert is engaged, and I arranged the matter with her. Practical jokes, however, are apt to miscarry and

go awry. In a city like New York, it does not do to take any chances in regard to people. I advise you earnestly to be careful in the future. It was just by good chance that you picked up Gilbert. It might just as well have been a very uncomfortable vag."

She slipped lightly back from him until she was just on the threshold of the doorway; then, with that look of gay devilry that she had worn the previous evening, she repeated that little pantomime of the morning, going through the motions of relieving him

of his personal belongings; but this time she stripped herself also—the necklace about her throat, the diamond wings in her hair, her jewels, her gown; and then speaking to him, whose eyes twinkled with almost irrepressible mirth, but whose grave demeanor gave no hint that he was amused, she said lightly, a trifle mockingly, smiling tenderly on him, however:

"And it's just as well for a business man to be cautious about the advice he gives, and—I knew Brian Gilbert long, long before I ever met you."



FOR THE DULL AND DREARY DAY

WHEN the frost is on the heather,
And the skies are dark and grim,
And the bleak and wintry weather
Makes the light of Heaven dim,
None the less my soul rejoices,
For I've got a little way
Of reserving bits of sunshine
For the dull and dreary day.

Little bits of sunny hours,
Little rifts of golden light,
Little hints of summer flowers
Will illumine any night.
Little tiny bits of fun-beams
Will light up your weary way
If you only save your sunbeams
For the dull and dreary day!

When the cares of life befall me,
And the clouds above hang low,
There is naught there to appal me
As along my path I go.
Every trouble, every sorrow,
Like the sea-mists fade away
When you've saved your bits of sunshine
For the dull and dreary day:

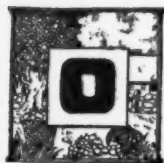
Little glints of golden treasure,
Little bits of mellow sheen,
Matters not how small the measure,
Hold the spirit fresh and green.
Little rays like elfin-spun beams,
Full of frolic and of play,
Come to him who saves his sunbeams
For the dull and dreary day.

—JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.



A MIDWINTER FLIGHT

♥ BY F. BERKELEY SMITH ◉



NE dines there much too well.

This snug Restaurant des Rois stands back from the grand boulevard in a slit of a street so that its ancient windows peer out askance at the gay life streaming by the corner.

The Burgundy at "Les Rois" warms the soul, and the Chablis! Ah! Where else in all Paris is there such Chablis—golden, sound, and clear as topaz? Chablis, I hold, should be drunk by some merry blonde whose heart is light; Burgundy by a brunette in a temper.

The small café on the ground floor is painted white, relieved by a frieze of gilded garlands, and topped by a ceiling frescoed with rosy nymphs romping in a smoked turquoise sky.

Between five and seven o'clock, these midwinter afternoons, the café is filled with its habitués—distinguishable old Frenchmen, who sip their absinthe leisurely enough to glance over the leading articles in the conservative *Temps* or the slightly gayer *Figaro*. Upstairs, by means of a spiral iron stairway, is a labyrinth of narrow, low-ceiled corridors leading to half a dozen stuffy little *cabinets particuliers*, about whose faded lambrequins and green-velveted chairs there still lurks the scent of perfumes once in vogue with the gallants, beaux, and belles of the Second Empire.

Alice de Bréville, that big, whole-souled bohemian, Tanrade the composer, and myself, are dining to-night

in one of these *intime* little rooms—the third to the left down the corridor.

Sapristi! What a change in Tanrade! He is becoming a responsible person; he has even grown neat and punctual; he who used to pound at the door of my house abandoned by the marsh at Pont du Sable, an hour late for dinner, dressed in a fisherman's sea-going overalls of brown canvas, a pair of sabots, and a hat that any passing vagabond might have discarded by the roadside. I could not help noticing carefully to-night his new suit of black broadcloth, with its standing collar, buttoned up under his genial chin. His black hair is neatly combed, and his broad-brimmed black hat that hangs over my own on the wall is but three days old. Thus had this *bon garçon* who had won the Prix de Rome been transformed—and Alice was responsible, I knew, for the change. Who would not change anything for so exquisite and dear a friend as Alice de Bréville? She, too, was in black, without a jewel—a gown which her lithe body wore with all its svelteness, a gown that matched her dark eyes and hair, accentuating the clean-cut delicacy of her features and the ivory clearness of her olive skin.

She is a very merry Alice to-night, for her long engagement at the Bouffes Parisiennes is at an end; and she has been making the best of her freedom by keeping Tanrade hard at work over the score of his new ballet. They are more in love with each other than ever—so much so that they insist on my dining with them, and so these little dinners of three at Les Rois have become al-

most nightly occurrences. It is often so with those in love, to be generous to an old friend—even lovers have need of company.

We were lingering over our coffee when the talk reverted to the new ballet.

"It is done, *ma chérie*," declared Tanrade, in reply to an imperative inquiry from Alice. "Bavière shall have the whole of the second act to-morrow."

"And the ballet in the third?" she asked sternly, lifting her brilliant eyes.

"*Eh, voilà!*" laughed that good fellow, as he drew forth from his pocket a thin roll of manuscript and spread it out before her, that she might see—But it is not discreet for me to continue, neither is it good form to embrace before the old *garçon de café*, who at that moment entered apologetically with the liqueurs. As for myself, I have long since ceased to count in such tender moments of reward, during which I am of no more consequence than a faithful poodle.

Again the *garçon* entered, this time with smiling assurance, for he brought me a telegram forwarded from my studio by my concierge. I opened the dispatch; the next instant I jumped to my feet.

"Read!" I cried, poking the blue slip under Tanrade's nose. "It's from the *curé*."

Tanrade read aloud:

Howling northeast gale. Duck and geese in. Come midnight train, bring two hundred fours, one hundred double zeros for ten bore.

"*Vive le curé!*" I shouted. "The good old boy to let us know! A northeast gale at last, a howler, he says."

"He is charming—the *curé*," breathed Alice, her breast heaving. "Charming!" she repeated in a voice faint with suppressed emotion.

Tanrade did not speak. He had let the dispatch slip to the floor, and sat staring at his glass.

"You'll come, of course," I said, with sudden apprehension, but he only shook his head. "What! You're not going?" I exclaimed in amazement. "We'll kill fifty ducks a night; it's the gale we've been waiting for."

I saw the sullen gleam that had crept into Alice's eyes soften; she drew near him—she barely touched his arm.

"Go, *mon cher!*" she said simply. "If you wish."

He lifted his head with a grim smile, and I saw their eyes meet. I well knew what was passing in his mind—his promise to her to work. More than this, I knew he had not the heart to leave her during her well-earned rest.

"*Ah, les hommes!*" Alice exclaimed, turning to me impetuously. "You are quite crazy, you hunters!"

I bowed humbly in apology, and again her dark eyes softened to tenderness.

"Non. Forgive me, *mon ami*," she went on. "You are sane enough until news comes of those wretched little ducks; then, *mon Dieu*, there is no holding you. Everything else goes out of your head; you become as mad as children rushing to a fête. Is it not so?"

Still Tanrade was silent. Now and then he gave a shrug of his big shoulders and toyed thoughtfully with his half empty glass of liqueur. *Sacristi!* It is not easy to decide between the woman you love and a northeast gale thrashing the marsh in front of my house abandoned. He, like myself, could already picture in his mind's eye duck after duck plunge out of the night among our live decoys. My ears, like his own, were already ringing with the roar of the guns from the sunken gabions. I could not resist a last appeal.

"Come," I insisted, "both of you! No—seriously—listen to me. There is plenty of dry wood in the garret; you shall have the *chambre d'amis*, dear friend, and this brute of a composer shall bunk in my room. We'll live, and shoot, and be happy. Suzette will be overjoyed at your coming. Let me wire her to have breakfast ready for us? Ah, if you'd only come!"

Alice laughed softly. "You are quite crazy, my poor friend," she said, laying her white hand on my shoulder. "You will freeze down there in that stone house of yours. Oh, *la, la!*" she

sighed knowingly. "The leaks for the wind, the cold bedrooms, the cold stone floors! *B-r-r-h-h!*"

Tanrade straightened back in his chair. "No," said he, "it is impossible. Bavière cannot wait. He must have his score. The rehearsals have been delayed long enough as it is. Go, *mon vieux*, and good luck to you!"

Again the old *garçon* entered, this time with the time-table I had sent him for in a hurry.

"*Voilà, monsieur!*" he began excitedly, his thumb nail indicating the line. "The twelve-eighteen, as monsieur sees, is an express—monsieur will not have to change at Lisieux."

"*Bon!*" I cried. "*Quick—a taxi-auto!*"

"*Bien, monsieur.* A good hunt to monsieur!" And he rushed out into the narrow corridor and down the spiral stairs while I hurried into my coat and hat.

Tanrade gripped my hand.

"Shoot straight!" he counseled, with a smile.

Alice gave me her cheek, which I reverently kissed and murmured my apologies for my insistence in her small ear. Then I swung open the door and made for the spiral stairs. At the bottom step I stopped short. I had completely forgotten I should not return until after New Year's, and I rushed back to wish them a *bonne année* in advance, but I closed the door of the stuffy little *cabinet particulier* quicker than I opened it, for her arms were about the sturdy neck of a good comrade whose self-denial made me feel like the mad infant rushing to the fête.

"*Bonne année, mes enfants!*" I called from the corridor, but they did not hear.

Ten minutes later I reached my studio, dumped three hundred cartridges into a worn valise, and caught the twelve-eighteen with four minutes to spare.

Enfin! It is winter in earnest!

The northeast gale gave, while it lasted, the best shooting the curé and I have ever had. Then the wind shifted

to the southwest with a falling barometer, and the flights ceased. Again, for three days, this Norman coast has been thrashed by squalls of driving snow. The wild geese are honking in V-shaped lines to an inland refuge, for the white sea is no longer tenable. Curlews cry hoarsely over the frozen fields. It is tough enough lying hid out in my sand pit on the open beach beyond the dunes, where I crack away at the ricketing flights of fat gray plover, and beat myself to keep warm. Fuel is scarce, and there is hardly a sou to be earned fishing in such cruel weather as this.

The country back of my house abandoned by the marsh is now stripped to bare actualities—all things are reduced to their proper size. Houses, barns, and the skeletons of leafless trees stand out, naked facts in the landscape. The orchards are soggy in mud, and the once green feathery lane back of my house abandoned is now a rough gash of frozen pools and rotten leaves.

Birds twitter in the thin hedges.

I would never have believed my wild garden, once so full of mystery—gay flowers, sunshine, and droning bees—to be so modest in size. A few rectangles of bare, frozen ground, and a clinging vine trembling against the old wall, are all that remain save the scraggly little fruit trees green with moss. Beyond, in a haze of chill sea mist, lie the woodlands—long, undulating ribbons of gray twigs crouching under a leaden sky.

In the cavernous cider press whose doors creak open within my courtyard, Père Bordier and a boy in ear tabs are busy making cider. If you stop and listen you can hear the cider trickling into the cask and Père Bordier encouraging the patient horse who circles round and round a great stone trough in which revolve two juggernauts of wooden wheels. The place reeks with the ooze and drip of crushed apples. The giant screw of oak, the massive beams—all seen in the gloomy light that filters through a small barred window cut through the massive stone walls—give the old *pressoir* the appearance of some feudal torture chamber.

Blood ran once, and people shrieked, in such places as these.

To-morrow begins the new year, and every peasant girl's cheeks are scrubbed bright and her hair neatly dressed, for to-morrow all France embraces—so the cheeks are rosy in readiness.

"*Tiens, mademoiselle!*" exclaims the butcher's boy, clattering into my kitchen in his sabots.

Eh, voilà! My good little maid of all work, Suzette, has been kissed by the butcher's boy and a moment later by Père Bordier, who has left the cider press for a steaming bowl of *café au lait*; and ten minutes later by the Mère Pequin who brings the milk, and then in turn by the postman, by her master, by the boy in ear tabs, and by every child in the village since daylight, for they have entered my courtyard in droves to wish the household of my house abandoned a happy new year, and have gone away content with their little stomachs filled and two big sous in their pockets.

And now an old fisherman enters my door. It is the Père Varnet—he who goes out with his sheep dog to dig clams, since he is eighty-four and too old to go to sea.

"*Ah, malheur!*" he sighs wearily, lifting his cap with a trembling hand as seamed and tough as his tarpaulin. "Ah, the bad luck!" he repeats in a thin, husky voice. "I would not have deranged monsieur, but, *bon Dieu*, I am hungry. I have had no bread since yesterday. It is a little beast this hunger, monsieur. There are no clams—I have searched from the great bank to Tocqueville."

It is surprising how quick Suzette can heat the milk.

The old man is now seated in her kitchen before a cold duck of the curé's killing and hot coffee—real coffee, with a stiff drink of applejack poured into it, and there are bread and cheese besides. Like hungry men, he eats in silence; and when he has eaten he tells me his dog is dead—that woolly sheep dog of his with a cast in one fishy green eye.

"*Oui, monsieur,*" confided the old

man, "he is dead. He was all I had left. It is not gay, monsieur, at eighty-four to lose one's last friend—and to have him poisoned."

"Who poisoned him?" I inquired hotly. "Was it Bonvin the butcher? They say it was he who poisoned both of Madame Vinet's cats."

"*Eh bent!*" he returned, and I saw the tears well up into his watery blue eyes. "One should not accuse one's neighbors, but they say it was he, monsieur—they say it was in his garden that Hector found the bad stuff. There are some who have no heart, monsieur."

"Bonvin, eh?" I cried. "It was that pig who poisoned him, eh? And you saved his little girl the time the *Belle Marie* foundered."

"*Oui, monsieur,* the time the *Belle Marie* foundered. It is true I did; we did the best we could. Had it not been for the fog and the ebb tide I think we could have saved them all."

He fell to eating again, cutting into the cheese discreetly—this fine old gentleman of the sea.

It is a pity that some one has not poisoned Bonvin, I thought. A short, thick fellow is Bonvin, with cheeks as red as raw chops, and small eyes that glitter with cruelty. Bonvin, whose youngest child, a male, has the look and intelligence of a veal, and whose mother weighs one hundred and five kilos—a fact which Bonvin is proud of, since his first wife, who died, was under weight despite the fact that the Bonvins, being in the business, eat meat twice daily. I have always believed the veal infant's hair is curled in suet. Its face grows purple after meals.

A rough old place is my village of vagabonds in winter, and I am glad Alice did not come. Poor Tanrade—how he would have enjoyed that north-east gale!

Two weeks later there came to my house anon by the marsh such joyful news that my hand trembled as I realized it—news that made my heart beat the quicker from sudden surprise and delight as I read and reread four closely written pages from Tanrade and

a corroborative postscript from Alice, leaving no doubt as to the truth.

"Suzette! Suzette!" I called. "Come quick! Eh! *Suzette!*"

I heard her trim feet running to me from the garden. The next instant she opened the door of my den and stood before me, her blue eyes and pretty mouth both open in wonder at being so hurriedly summoned.

"What is the matter, monsieur?" she exclaimed, panting, her fresh young cheeks all the rosier from her run.

"Monsieur Tanrade and Madame de Bréville are going to be married," I announced as calmly as I could.

"*Hélas!*" gasped Suzette.

"*Et voilà—et voilà!*" I cried, throwing the letter back on the table, while I squared my back to the blazing fire of my den and waited for the little maid's astonishment to subside.

Suzette did not speak.

"It is true, nevertheless," I added, with enthusiasm. "They are to be married in Pont du Sable. We shall have a fête such as there never was. Ah, you will have plenty of cooking to do, *mon enfant*. Run, find Monsieur le Curé. He must know at once."

Suzette did not move. Without a word she buried her face in her apron and burst into tears.

"Oh, monsieur!" she sobbed. "Oh, monsieur! It is true—that—I—I—have—no luck!"

"*Eh bien!* my child," I returned, "and it is thus you take such happy news?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" sobbed the little maid. "It is—true—I—have no luck."

"What is the matter, Suzette? Tell me!" I pleaded. Never had I seen her so broken-hearted, even on the day she smashed the mirror.

I saw her sway toward me like the child she was.

"There—there—*mais voyons!*" I exclaimed in a vain effort to stop her tears. "*Mais voyons!* Come, you must not cry like that."

Little by little she ceased crying, until her sobbing gave way to brave little hiccoughs; then, at length, she opened her eyes.

"Suzette," I whispered—the thought flashing through my mind—"is it possible that *you* love Monsieur Tanrade?"

I saw her strong little body tremble. "No, monsieur," she breathed, and the tears fell afresh.

"Tell me the truth, Suzette."

"I have told monsieur the—the—truth," she stammered bravely, with a fresh effort to strangle her sobs.

"You do not love Monsieur Tanrade, my child?"

"No, monsieur. I—I—was a little fool to have cried. It was stronger than I—the news. The marriage is so gay, monsieur—it is so easy for some."

"Ah! Then you do love some one?"

"*Oui, monsieur.*" And her eyes looked up into mine.

"Who? *Mon Dieu!*"

"Gaston, monsieur, as always."

"Gaston, eh? The little soldier I lodged during the manœuvres, the little trombonist whom the general swore he would put in jail for missing his train. *Sapristi!* I had forgotten him. And you wish to marry him, Suzette?"

She nodded mutely in assent, then with a hopeless little sigh, she added: "*Hélas!*—it is not easy—when one has nothing one must work hard and wait. Ah, *mon Dieu!*"

"Sit down, my little one," I said. "I have something serious to think over."

She did as I bade her, seating herself in silence before the fire. I had never regarded Suzette as a servant—she had always been to me more like a child whom I was responsible for. What would my house abandoned by the marsh have been without her cheeriness, her devotion, I thought, and what would it be when she was gone? No other Suzette would ever be like her—and her cooking would vanish with the rest. *Diable!* These little marriages play the devil with us at times. And yet, if any one deserved to be happy it was Suzette. I realized, too, all that her going would mean to me, and that her devotion to her master was such that if I should say "stay" she would have stayed on quite as if her own father had counseled her.

As I turned toward her sitting hum-

bly in the chair, I saw she was again struggling to keep back her tears. It was high time for me to speak.

I seated myself beside her upon the arm of the chair and took her warm little hands in mine.

"You shall marry your Gaston, Suzette," I said, "and you shall have enough to marry on even if I have to sell the big field and the cow that goes with it."

She started, trembling violently, then gave a little gasp of joy.

"Oh, monsieur! And it is true!" she cried eagerly.

"Yes, my child. There shall be two weddings in Pont du Sable! Now run and tell Monsieur le Curé."

Monsieur le Curé ran, too, when he heard the news—straight to my house abandoned, by the short cut back of the village, skirting the tawny marsh.

"*Eh bien! Eh bien!*" he exclaimed as he burst into my den, his keen eyes shining. "It is too good to be true—and not a word to us about it until now! *Ah, les rosses! Ah, les rosses!*" he repeated, with a broad grin of delight as he eagerly read Tanrade's letter, telling him that the banns were published; that he was to marry them in the little gray church with the cracked bell, and that but ten days remained before the wedding. He began pacing the floor, his hands clasped behind him—a habit he had when he was very happy.

"And Suzette?" I asked. "Has she told you?"

"Yes," he returned, with a nod. "She is a good child, she deserves to be happy—" Then he stopped and inquired seriously: "What will you do without her?"

"One must not be selfish," I replied, with a helpless shrug. "Suzette has earned it—so has Tanrade. It was his unfinished opera that was in the way. Alice was clever."

He crossed to where I stood and laid his hand on my shoulder, and though he did not open his lips I knew what was passing in his mind.

"Charity to all," he said softly at length. "It is so good to make others

happy! Courage, *mon petit!* The price we pay for love, devotion, friendship, is always a heavy one." Suddenly his face lighted up. "Have you any idea," he exclaimed, "how much there is to do and how little time to do it in? Let us prepare!" he cried vibrantly.

And thus began the busiest week the house abandoned had ever known, beginning with the curé and I restocking the garret with dry wood while Suzette worked ferociously at housecleaning, and every detail of the wedding breakfast was planned and arranged for—no easy problem in my lost village in midwinter. If there was a good fish to be had out of the sea we knew we could rely on Marianne to get it. Even the old fisherman, Varnet, went off with fresh courage in search of clams, and good Madame Vinet opened her heart and her wine cellar.

It was the curé who knew well a certain dozen of rare Burgundy that had lain snug beneath the stairs of Madame Vinet's small café—a vintage the good soul had come into possession of the first year of her own marriage, and which she ceded to me for the ridiculously low price of twenty sous the bottle, precisely what it had cost her in her youth.

It is over, and I am alone by my fire. As I look back on to-day—their wedding day—it seems as if I had been living through some happy dream that has vanished only too quickly, and out of which I recall dimly but half its incidents.

That was a merry procession of old friends that marched to the ruddy old mayor's, where there were the civil marriage and some madeira, and so on to the little gray church where Monsieur le Curé was waiting. That musty old church in which the tall candles burned and Monsieur le Curé's voice sounded so grave and clear.

And we sat together, the good old general and I, and in front of us were Alice's old friend Germaine, chic and pretty in her sables, and Blondel, who had left his unfinished editorial and driven hard to be present, and beside

him in the worn pew sat the Marquis and Marquise de Clamand; and the rest of the worn pews were filled with fisher folk; and Marianne sat on my left, and old Père Varnet with Suzette beyond him. And every one's eyes were upon Alice and Tanrade, for they were good to look upon. And it was over quickly, and I was glad of it, for the candle flames had begun to form little halos before my eyes.

And so we went on singing again through the village, amid the booming of shotguns in honor of the newly wed, to the house abandoned. And all the while the bells rang lustily from the gray belfry; rang clear, rang out after us, all the way back to the house abandoned, and were still ringing when we sat down to our jolly breakfast.

"Let them ring!" cried the curé. "I have two old salts of the sea taking turns at the rope," he confided in my ear. "Ring on!" he cried aloud, as we lifted our glasses to the bride. "Ring loud that the good God may hear!"

And how lovely the room looked, for the table was a mass of roses fresh from Paris, and the old walls and ceiling were green with mistletoe and holly. Moreover, the room was warm with the hearts of friends and the cheer from blazing logs that crackled merrily up the blackened throat of my chimney. And there were kisses with this feast that came from the heart; and sound red wine that went to it. And later the courtyard was filled with villagers come to congratulate and to drink the health of the bride and groom.

They are gone.

And the thrice happy Suzette is dreaming of her own wedding to come,

for it is long past midnight, and I am alone with my wise old cat, "The Essence of Selfishness," and my good and faithful spaniel whom I call "Mr. Bear," for he looks like a young cinnamon, all save his ears. If poor De Saignac were alive he would hardly recognize the little spaniel puppy he gave me, he has grown so. He has crept into my arms, big as he is, awakening jealousy in The Essence of Selfishness, for she hates him. Besides, we have taken her favorite chair. Poor Mr. Bear, who never troubles her!

"And you—beast whom I love—another hiss out of you, another flattening of your ears close to your skull, and you go straight to bed. There will be no Suzette to put you there soon, and there is now no Alice, nor Tanrade to spoil you. They are gone, pussy kit."

One o'clock—and the fire in embers. I rose, and Mr. Bear followed me out into the garden. The land lay still and cold under millions of stars. High above my chimney came faintly the "Honk, honk!" of a flock of geese.

Then I closed my door, bolted the inner shutter, lighted my candle, and motioned to Mr. Bear. The Essence of Selfishness was first on the creaky stairs. She paused halfway up to let Mr. Bear pass, her ears again flat to her skull. Then I took them both to my room where they slept in opposite corners.

Lost village by the tawny marsh! Lost, village, indeed, to-night! In which were hearts I loved, good comrades, and sound red wine—Hark! The rush of wings! I must be up at dawn. It will help me forget. Sleep well, Mr. Bear!



AROUND THE BRIDGE TABLE



By Arthur
Loring Bruce



LAST New Year's Eve, the sitting room of the U— Club, in New York, had been—save for myself—deserted since dinner time. A smouldering fire burned low in the grate; the wind blew up and down Fifth Avenue like a night porter whistling, ineffectually, for a hansom on a rainy evening in the midst of a London season. The clerk in the hall was laboriously posting the three months' accounts on the posting board. The chimes of the Metropolitan tower tolled ten o'clock. The steam radiators sang in unison their cheerless and monotonous song. On the central table, there showed, in the faint light of a red-shaded lamp, the usual array of spirit-blighting and gloom-compelling English reviews; the *Contemporary*, the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Edinburgh*, and the *Fortnightly*. The hideous black marble clock confided its invariable daily recital to its usual audience, six leather armchairs and two leather sofas, on one of which latter there dozed—with a closed *Saturday Review* in his lap—the more or less voracious chronicler of this cheerless anecdote. I had been thinking of new leaves to be turned, and high resolves to be taken, and of the souls of those debonair and high-spirited young rascals who had graced that selfsame sofa before me, their glasses in their eyes, or in their hands, and who had, all unwillingly, passed on to their more permanent and more ultimate rewards.

Heavens! How melancholy I was!

Where, I wondered, were all those hapless and homeless bachelors that were wont to make that room the scene of their nightly confabulations. The New Year's spirit, I mused, had doubtless led them all to some less gloomy grotto. I alone, it appeared, of all those miserable beings was being miserable then. At this point, my melancholy reveries were interrupted by Mr. I—, who stalked majestically and gloomily into the room.

He thereupon poked the fire, warmed his hands, ordered a drink, lighted a cigarette, and opened a newspaper, all with the air of one who was a thrall to weariness and pain. I looked at him, feeling a mild interest in his sorrows, and ventured to say:

"Rest, rest, perturbed spirit."

His eye glanced at me as if he were in mortal agony.

"Well may you quote 'Hamlet' to me to-night," he cried.

"But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy
young blood,

Make thy two eyes, like stars, to start
from their spheres,

And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

With this, he swallowed his drink, and, distraught as he was, left the club in a closed motor car.

I knew his secret, alas, too well. He was one of the most melancholy objects in modern society, a pariah, an endless exile, a hermit in a taxicab, a Trappist in a dress suit, a wandering Christian in a Jewish city, a laughingstock. He was, in short, a bridge widower.

For five years he has resolutely refused to learn those wretched games, bridge and auction. Pain and exile have been his lot.

There are several of these poor creatures in the society of the metropolis. They are, however, shunned and avoided everywhere. Lepers get pity, at least, but a bridge widower is denied even that trifling balm. They are, very properly, segregated in the great world of fashion—objects of derision, but never of sympathy.

Mr. I.'s case is a particularly pathetic one. His wife is one of the six or eight most fashionable and most popular women in New York. She is devoted, with a sort of fanatical devotion, to bridge, and never passes an evening without gracing one of the thousand or more bridge dinners that are given nightly in New York.

These dinners are of five or nine people—her husband invariably making the fifth or ninth spoke in the wheel of pleasure. After dinner, the cards are brought out, and Mr. I. is always left to read a book, look at the prints on the wall, take a nap, or twirl his thumbs.

Mr. I. likes to go to bed at ten. His wife likes to play bridge until half-past twelve. They compromise. He kicks his heels against the corridors, and she only plays until twelve-twenty. Mr. I. then takes out his purse, and pays what his wife has lost, and then his evening's delight is o'er.

"Why," you will say, "does he do it? Why doesn't he rebel, or let her go to these dinners without him?" Ah, reader, it is very evident that you don't know Mrs. I., her infectious laughter, her eloquent eyes, her gift of sympathy, her charming manners—or her love of bridge! In her case, it might be said, merely to paraphrase, that:

Looking forward, through the ages,

Through the dust of gathering years,

There are lights against a background

Gray with distant mist of tears;

Grateful glimpses as of sunlight

Gleaming bright through rock and ridge,

Glimpses of that care-dispelling,

Rare and radiant game of bridge.

The other night I was playing double dummy bridge against this same Mrs. I. She is an exceedingly able-bodied opponent, and she covered herself with much glory by correctly playing the following hand—one of the most puzzling hands of the evening. I might have played the hand differently; but, against the attack that I was subjected to, I was powerless to change the issue of the contest, and my fair opponent scored up two by cards, the game, and the rubber. She played A.-B.'s cards, and I played Y.-Z.'s. Here are the hands:

Z. (dealer). Ace, 6 hearts; 10, 9, 6, 3 clubs; ace, 4, 3 diamonds; knave, 10, 8, 2 spades.

A. (leader). Knave, 7, 5, 4, 2 hearts; king, 8, 2 clubs; king, queen diamonds; 7, 5, 3 spades.

Y. (dummy). King, queen, 10, 3 hearts; queen, knave clubs; 10, 9, 7, 2 diamonds; king, 9, 6 spades.

B. (third hand). Nine, 8 hearts; ace, 7, 5, 4 clubs; knave, 8, 6, 5 diamonds; ace, queen, 4 spades.

I was 24 to 0 on the rubber game. I dealt, and left it to Y., who, by rule, made it dealer. Mrs. I. looked at A.'s hand, and hesitated for a long while. She then doubled, and led the king of diamonds. How did she play A.'s and B.'s cards in order to win the rubber? Y.'s and B.'s hands were exposed. The solution to this problem will be found at the end of this article.

While we are on the subject of bridge problems, we might as well quote a little seven-card gem of W. H. Whitfeld's, as my readers always seem to get more amusement out of the short problems than they do out of the longer, or thirteen-card, hands. The solution of the puzzle will be found at the end of this article.

Hearts are trumps. Z. is to lead, and, with Y. as a partner, is to take six out of the seven tricks, no matter how cleverly A. and B. may play. The hands are as follows:

B. (dealer). Ace, knave, 9 hearts; knave, 10 clubs; queen diamonds; 9 spades.

Z. (leader). Queen, 10 hearts; king, queen, 9, 3 clubs; ace diamonds.

A. (dummy). Three, 2 hearts; 8, 7, 5 clubs; 9, 8 diamonds.

Y. (third hand). King, 8, 7, 6, 5 hearts; 10, 6 diamonds.

These are halcyon days for the teachers of bridge in New York and in other large cities. They have all deserted bridge, and are teaching auction in its stead. As auction is a new game in America, comparatively few people know how to play it with anything like good judgment. The teachers are asking as high as ten dollars an hour for single pupils, and thirty dollars an hour for four pupils. At this rate, some of them must be making as much as twenty thousand dollars a year, a very fair sum to net for five or six hours of daily work during the winter months.

As a matter of fact, there is a well-authenticated historical precedent for such heavy profits in teaching whist. I allude, of course, to the celebrated Edmond Hoyle, who, over one hundred and fifty years ago, netted a small fortune from his lessons in whist. All the fashionable world of London was agog, as far back as 1745, over Hoyle's treatises on whist and his whist lessons to the ladies and gentlemen of the day. There was a great stir over Hoyle's taking money for his lessons, and many were the pamphlets, parodies, and skits that resulted from it.

About Hoyle's antecedents but little is known. He was born in 1672; it is said that he was educated for the bar, but he soon developed a wonderful talent for all sorts of card games, and decided to seek a living from writing books and pamphlets on the prevailing games of the time. Of the first edition of his "Short Treatise," there is only one known copy, that in the Bodleian Library.

Internal evidence shows that Hoyle originally drew up notes for the use of his pupils. His early editions speak of "purchasers of the treatise in manuscript, disposed of the last winter," and further state that the author of it "has fram'd an Artificial Memory, which

takes not off your attention from your game; and, if required, he is ready to communicate it, upon payment of one guinea. And also, he will explain any cases in the book, upon payment of one guinea more."

Hoyle's treatise sold for a guinea a copy, and ran through five editions in one year. In the seventeenth edition of it, it was announced that Mr. Hoyle was dead. He died in Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square, in 1769, at the somewhat improbable age of ninety-seven. The phrase, "according to Hoyle," can be traced back to 1750.

In one of the most amusing of the pamphlets, "The Humours of Whist," leveled at Hoyle and his whist lessons, there occurs this really witty shaft, supposed to be "spoke" by one of the waiters at White's Coffee House:

Who will believe that Man could e'er exist
Who spent near half an Age in studying
Whist?

Grew gray with Calculation—laboured hard!
As if Life's Business center'd in a Card?

That such there is, let me to those appeal,
Who with such liberal Hands reward his
Zeal.

Lo! Whist he makes a science, and our
Peers
Deign to turn School Boys in their riper
Years.

But, to go back to auction: The consensus of opinion among good bridge players is that auction is a far more amusing game than straight bridge, and with this opinion I must reluctantly agree. It is a fresher, keener, and a more exciting game than any card game that I know of. There is, as yet, but the vaguest knowledge of the possibilities of it. It is still in its infancy; but, young as it is, it threatens utterly to annihilate bridge. There is but little known of its origin. We are told that, although it cannot lay claim to many years of existence, its origin and evolution began as early as January, 1903.

In that month, three members of the Indian Civil Service found themselves alone in a far-away hill station, where they hunted in vain for a fourth man to make up a rubber of bridge. For some months they contented themselves

with cutthroat bridge, admittedly a most insipid form of dissipation.

Finally, one of them suggested that they should all apply themselves to the problem of inventing a good three-handed variation of bridge, with a little dash in it of poker, and a touch, perhaps, of seven-handed euchre. The result of this determination was the game of auction bridge, which was played, at first, as a three-handed game, but most of the rules of which have, by this time, suffered a somewhat violent sea change.

For a long time the game did not become popular. It seemed to make no headway at all, but—as a game for four players—it was finally introduced into the Bath Club, in London—with certain modifications and improvements—and here it flourished, from the end of 1905 until the spring of 1908, in solitary grandeur. Up to this point, it had not been accepted in any of the other English clubs; but, in May, 1908, a rubber of it was tried in the Portland Club, the most famous card club in the world, with such happy results that, in six months' time, it had practically ousted bridge from its old Portland coign of vantage.

There was, at that time, so much confusion about the laws of the game that a committee composed of the best players in the Bath Club and in the Portland, finally framed a set of rules that was adopted by nearly all auction players in England. In 1908, a book was published, setting forth these rules, and, with slight modifications, those rules are in force in America to-day.

The declaration in auction is the point on which there has always been the widest divergence of opinion. Dalton, Ellwell, Street, and Foster all have more or less different views as to the best and safest method of declaring the trump in auction. Here is what Mr. Dalton, the accepted English authority on the game, has to say of the declaration:

In the early days of auction bridge, under the old rules, there were two distinct schools of players—or, perhaps I should say, of declarers—which really amounts to the same

thing. The guiding principle of the one school was to conceal their strength as much as possible, in the hope of inducing their opponents to declare above the value of their hands, when they would pounce down upon them, double them, and probably secure a very substantial score above the line. The aim and object of the other school was to win the game and rubber as quickly as possible, with no beating about the bush at all, and these players always declared up to the full value of their hands straightaway.

It was found that the latter school used to win more rubbers than the former, but the rubbers which they won were invariably small ones; whereas, when the others in the waiting school won a rubber, it generally assumed proportions which were very pleasing to themselves, if not to the opponents. The introduction of the new one-spade limitation rule brought about a great change in this state of affairs. The two schools still exist, but there is not nearly the marked difference in them which there used to be, and on many points they are agreed. The opening from strength is now universal, or very nearly so, and there is but little of lying low and declaring one spade on a strong no-trump hand, which used to be such a favorite method of opening the game. There are some players who do it occasionally, but it is now quite the exception, instead of being, as it formerly was, the general practice.

The best players in New York now declare, originally, one spade on a bad hand, two spades on a slightly better than average hand, one no trumps on any hand that might be charitably called a no trumper, and clubs, hearts, or diamonds, when any one of those suits is strong, without strength enough in the other suits to justify a no-trump call.

Here is the latest story—a true one, we are told—of one of our best-known bankers. He is an ardent and expert bridger, and the cardroom of the Union Club is usually the scene of his bridge battles. One afternoon, early in the past winter, he and three other gentlemen settled down to a quiet game of auction. The stakes were five-cent points. None of the players had had much experience with the game. They were all warm and close friends, and the pleasantest spirit of good-fellowship prevailed—at the beginning. Soon, however, the banker and one of his opponents locked horns, and commenced a frightful encounter in bidding, to determine as to which of them should

play the hand. The banker finally won it with a bid of four diamonds, which was cheerfully doubled by the leader. The banker was clearly a little nettled, but refused to redouble. The hand was then played, and the banker lost the odd trick, a matter that involved a loss of something a little over four dollars. The rubber was finished on the next deal, and totaled exactly six dollars against the now visibly irate banker. He was evidently very much vexed and put out, and he paid out this vast sum to the winners with evident disrelish.

"I hate to lose this money," he said. "It goes, I must confess, against my grain to let go of it."

As he was about to leave the card-room, his adversary sat him down on a sofa, and began to dilate to him upon the need of New York for a large State park on the Hudson. In less than ten minutes the banker had not only succeeded in forgetting the enormous sum of six dollars, but had pledged, besides, for the park project, the comparatively insignificant sum of five hundred thousand dollars.

Do any of my readers know what is the most common and familiar portrait in the world? I heard this matter discussed, the other evening, with rare erudition and cogency. One of the gentlemen was sure that Raphael's "Sistine Madonna" was the best-known portrait in the world. Another was all for Leonardo's "Mona Lisa." Still another contended that no likeness was so universally known as that of King Edward on the coins of Great Britain. I mentioned the sphinx, and somebody else mentioned the Venus of Milo. The discussion was growing warmer, when a mild and callow youth chirped up with:

"You are all wrong! All of you! The best-known portrait in the world is the queen of spades."

He then proceeded to prove to us, what, it seems, is common knowledge among the *cognoscenti*, namely, that the queen of spades is a bona-fide likeness of the late Queen Anne of Britain. It seems that, somewhere along about 1710, the English and European sta-

tioners fixed on the image of the then Queen of England as a suitable one to inscribe on their playing cards. For two hundred years or more, her face has looked out at us, not altogether unpleasantly—particularly in *bézique*—from the depths of the pack. How much longer, we wonder, will her physiognomy be shuffled down the corridors of time?

For our part we are greatly attached to the lady in question. We would not have her face removed or even beautified. There is a certain homely austerity about her that we rather like. And what is it about her that makes her so renowned? Have my readers ever read Pushkin's remarkable little novel called "The Queen of Spades"? It is a great favorite among the Russians and the Poles, and is probably the best story ever written about a playing card. Did not the greatest living Russian composer write an opera about her? Was she not singled out for the highest honors in *bézique*? Decidedly, there are majesty and worth and sinew in her.

Mrs. Battle, we are told, would have done away with colors and court cards in whist. She saw no need for such displays and colorations, but Charles Lamb, in his essays of blessed memory, was wont to chide the old lady, and remonstrate with her.

"But the eye, my dear madam," he would say, "is agreeably refreshed by the variety. Man is not a creature of pure reason—he must have his senses delightfully appealed to. We see it in Roman Catholic countries, where the music and the paintings draw in many to worship, whom your Quaker spirit of unsensualizing would have kept out. You yourself have a pretty collection of paintings—but confess to me, whether walking in your gallery among those clear Vandykes or Paul Potters, you ever felt your bosom glow with an elegant delight, at all comparable to *that* you have it in your power to experience most evenings over a well-arranged assortment of the court cards? The pretty antic habits, like heralds in a procession—the gay tri-

umph-assuring scarlets—the contrasting deadly killing sables—the ‘hoary majesty of spades.’

“All these might be dispensed with; and, with their naked names upon the drab pasteboard, the game of whist might go on very well, pictureless. But the *beauty* of cards would be extinguished forever. Stripped of all that is imaginative in them, they must degenerate into mere gambling.”

Solution of the thirteen-card heart problem quoted in the body of this article. The italicized card wins the trick.

Trick 1. King diamonds, 2, 5, *ace*.
No lead but the king of diamonds can possibly win two by cards for A. and B. Z. would gain nothing by “holding up” his ace of diamonds.

Trick 2. *Ace hearts*, 2, 3, 8.

If Z. leads anything but trumps here, A. might easily discard a club on the third round of diamonds, and A. would make two of his trumps. The best play is, undeniably, to draw four of A.’s trumps.

Trick 3. Six hearts, 4, 10, 9.

Trick 4. *King hearts*, 4 clubs, 3 diamonds, 5 hearts.

Trick 5. *Queen hearts*, 5 clubs, 4 diamonds, 7 hearts.

Trick 6. *Queen clubs*, *ace*, 3, 2.

Trick 7. Six diamonds, 6 clubs, *queen*, 7 diamonds.

Trick 8. Three spades, 6, *queen*, 2.

Trick 9. *Knave diamonds*, 8 spades, 5 spades, 9 diamonds.

Trick 10. Seven clubs, 9, *king*, jack.

Trick 11. *Knave hearts*, 9 spades, 8 diamonds, 10 spades.

Both opponents are here literally

forced to unguard their spade suits, for, if Y. discards the 10 diamonds, B. will throw the 4 of spades, and make his ace of spades and 8 of diamonds, or eight tricks in all; while, if Z. discards his 10 clubs, A. will make his 8 of clubs before going over to B.’s ace of spades, or eight tricks in all.

Trick 12. Seven spades, king, *ace*, knave.

Trick 13. *Four spades*, 10 clubs, 8 clubs, 10 diamonds.

Solution of the seven-card heart problem quoted in the body of this article. The italicized card wins the trick.

Trick 1. Three clubs, 5, 5 *hearts*, 10 clubs.

Trick 2. Six diamonds, queen, *ace*, 8.

Trick 3. Nine clubs, 7, 6 *hearts*, knave clubs.

Trick 4. Ten diamonds.

Here B. is in a quandary. However he plays, he and his partner can only make the ace of trumps.

In this problem, every other mode of attack can be defeated if A. and B. play properly. A plausible lead is that of the ace of diamonds, followed by a club, which Y. trumps. This would fail, however, for, if Y. next, at trick 3, leads a small trump, B. would put up his ace and lead his remaining club; if, on the other hand, Y. leads the 10 diamonds, B. would *discard his club*, and decline to trump. In the latter case, when Y. next leads a small trump, trick 4, B. will put on the ace at once, and return the suit, thus throwing the lead into Z.’s hand; so that B.’s last trump cannot be drawn.





THE ONLY MAN

BY MARTHA McCULLOCH WILLIAMS



RS. LOUISE ACTON had been ten years a widow, and was, for the most part, nunlike, even semi-saintly, in manner and aspect. However, there were lapses. Except in the lapses she looked every day of her forty-five years. Very old women, and very young ones, adored her. Those in between admired her rather grudgingly, and liked her—with reservations. It certainly seemed unfair, indeed almost uncanny, to have a person one has quite left out of the count suddenly show that she must be stoutly reckoned with.

In her own house, which was none so big, but cheerfully full of flowers and sunlight, Louise had a knack of effacing herself in behalf of her guests. She wore the simplest tasteful frocks, hardly ever a jewel, and did her hair in the way she knew became her least. Furthermore, she listened instead of talking, but somehow managed to draw out and show off the rest; men or women—she was nobly impartial between the sexes. So much so that had she been seen only as a hostess the chances are she would have been unanimously canonized by the countryside.

Otherwheres, other manners. At least some times. It is a lamentable fact that her lapses into frivolity and fascination were known and counted against her, even in those households which saw her only a nun, or a devotee. Always there was a man in the case—a good fellow in imminent danger of matrimony. Louise rescued them, but dropped them in the laps of more suitable partners, who were rea-

sonably grateful to her for leaving instead of taking them, but always furiously angry with her for having had the chance of them.

Come to think of it, it was ridiculous, an affront to young womanhood, to have real men, excellently marriageable, of assorted ages, captivated by a woman with graying hair, and the suspicion of crow's-feet about her eyes. The eyes were handsome—the most prejudiced did not deny that. Neither could they deny the angular grace and liteness of the slim figure, nor that those were real roses which now and again bloomed in the thin cheeks. Add true Spanish feet that danced light as thisledown, hair that had a trick of aureoling when permitted, and the catalogue of Acton charms is complete. Add further that the owner of them knew how to dress and had money enough to indulge her fine taste, and the situation stands revealed.

Except, of course, as to the background. People wondered no little why Mrs. Acton did not marry again. She was alone in the world. It could not be devotion to a memory. Though she had been most fond and tender and faithful to her poor Arthur, it was well understood she had married him to take care of him. They were cousins, and he had been always quite mad about her, but she had withstood him until he was suddenly stricken down. A fall in the hunting field had left him hopelessly crippled, only a week before the failure and flight of a thrice-trusted friend had practically beggared him.

The doctors had given him a year of life—it had stretched to fifteen, helped by Louise's enveloping care, and a grim

and jealous satisfaction in knowing her irrevocably his own. She had carried weight so gallantly, never murmuring or whining, taking no thought for herself, or her pleasures, envy itself could not grudge her her riches, or jealousy pick a flaw. Those sacrificed years indeed had built for her a pedestal—severe virtue could not see her step down from behind it without a sense of outrage. Louise understood that very well, but being a woman and a willful one, kept playing games whenever the candle appeared to her to be worth it.

If John Waring himself had not seemed to her worth it she would have had to captivate him because of his mother. That dear and exquisite gentlewoman was wrapped up in her only son, and full of fear and trembling whenever she thought of his marriage. Still, she pined to have him marry—to have a younger mistress for the big house, and the patter of little feet about its shining floors. But John, engrossed in business, in man-life generally, had come to forty without a serious affair. Then his several odd millions captivated Miss Vera Maurice, who set herself in turn to captivate their owner. She had brought him to the very edge of proposing, when Louise, a vision in pale pink, with smothers of yellow lace, took a hand in the game.

Indirect attack is a fine art. Louise was mistress of it. At the Gadsdens' dance, to which she went with the Warings, she waltzed once with John, rather as though it were a matter of courtesy, then sat out dances with Andy MacLean, a person as conceited as became an ex-football champion who has made good in the world of big business. He was young enough to feel fearfully experienced, wearily world-wise.

"One gets so surfeited with bread-and-butter buds one pines for caviare," he confided to Louise as they cut out the third number, a two-step, and made their way to a seat under the stairs. Louise looked down—to hide the dancing of her eyes. But John Waring, passing just then with Vera close be-

side him, caught a glance that was starry, and noted with a sense of irritation that Louise, who had been quite pale, had the color of wild roses.

A saint enshrined had no business to blush and brighten for Andy MacLean—a hulking bundle of crass conceit, as John saw things. Waring felt that without saying it, even to his inner consciousness. The feeling made him assume a proprietary air toward Louise, when, a little later, he took her out to supper. He was more than ever the lord proprietor, when at the carriage door she thanked Andy artlessly for picking up her fan, and bade him call whenever he had time to spare for old folk. It was part of her wisdom, you see, to spike the enemy's guns by always dwelling upon her age.

Andy came the next day—and the next. John Waring did the same thing. Just why, he could not perhaps have told, but Louise knew very well. Virile impulse leads a man to defend a woman against every other man than himself. John, in fear Andy would make Louise a victim and ridiculous, had flung himself recklessly into the breach. Louise, seen thus at close range upon the woman plane, had quite spoiled his taste for Vera Maurice. Indeed, for any other woman. He had told her so, forthrightly, upon a March afternoon, some four months later than his night of awakening. And the answer he had got was, of all things: "Andy MacLean has tired of the Nile, and is going on round the world. Don't you think you had better go with him?"

Then had followed the usual thing—with, however, an unusual ending. Louise had declared she liked him too well to think of marrying him—he deserved a better fate—a wife, younger, more beautiful—in fact, the freshness of an unrepaid heart. John had countered that he himself best knew what he wanted; moreover, he was going to have it. He was no child to be played with, no conceited ass to be teased and goaded into running away after he had shown himself too sulky to be soothed—John thought this an especially neat fit for Andy.

After it he had got up, and stamped about the room, coming back at last to face Louise, who was also standing, and showed an inch the taller. When he made to take her hands, she had locked them childishly behind her, whereupon he had kissed her, plumply, full on the lips, and left her, saying over his shoulder, with his hand on the doorknob: "When you make up your mind as to the sort of ring you want, let me know."

Louise sat down laughing, rather breathlessly, to be sure. John was certainly developing—she wished she were not a coward, so she could tell him the truth about the Only Man—the memory that stood sentinel at the door of her heart. Not the shadowy simulacrum of her maimed husband, but somebody tall and lithely strong, with crisp yellow hair, the bluest blue eyes, and a voice, not loud, but with the cadences of a trumpet call. She had been free when they met; he bound, but not irrevocably. There had been no confessed love—only an understanding. She knew he would have broken with the other woman at a word, even a look, from her. Since she did not like the other woman, she had felt bound to regard scrupulously her prior right.

Galbreth Lane, the Only Man, had never kissed her. But at the wedding, to which she went, her most radiant self, he had held her hand tight when it came to good-by, and said, the trumpet note *tremolo*; "Pray God you have done well—Louise."

Then the couple had been whisked away—where, she had never let herself know. A month later came her own sombre marriage. Her world, applauding her infinite compassion, never dreamed that the marriage was her crown of thorns. It was a sin to have taken away the love of another woman's lover—one she felt she must expiate by something heavier than her own heartbreak.

Certainly it is the impossible which happens. Inside three days, Louise found herself tentatively betrothed to John Waring, also involuntary hostess

to a bewildering young woman, daughter to the Only Man. There was occult connection between the two things. They had come about in this wise: The girl, coming from the far Southwest to visit her mother's sister, Mrs. Gray, had found the Gray household quarantined through measles—and had been shunted onto Acton hospitality. There was distant kinship betwixt the Grays and poor dead Arthur—therefore Louise had felt the more bound to honor the claim upon her.

Outwardly calm, but inwardly tremulous, she had welcomed a young goddess, tall, with live golden hair, and the bluest eyes in the world. The very wife for John Waring, she decided off-hand. But he would refuse utterly to see it, were the girl flung at his head, or even if he himself had perfect freedom to approach her. Louise chuckled mildly as she thought upon the attraction of forbidden fruit—then telephoned to Waring enigmatically: "You will have to buy a ring before long. I don't know yet what sort."

When John answered the message in person, she fenced with him cleverly, making but half-promises, before she played her trump card, her roseate queen of hearts. Mildred Lane looked the part exquisitely—she was tall and twenty, of a fine natural poise, and a manner that did much credit to her finishing school. She was properly, delicately grateful, without effusion, and manifested toward her hostess a very pretty deference. Altogether, she rather took John Waring's breath. Louise chuckled again, noting it, but below her laughing there was deep happiness—John, whom she loved truly, was going to find deeper happiness with this girl who ought to have been her daughter, and who was so like, so like, her one dear love.

Following came a breathless fortnight, filled with dinners, dances, hunt breakfasts, a ball at the Country Club, gay gallops through budding woodland, and motor spins about the hard white roads betwixt faintly greening hedges. Mildred had many gallants—she had taken the countryside by storm—

but always and everywhere Waring was the first of them. He did not neglect Louise—she bore her part in everything. But she smiled rather wistfully when she looked in the glass. Undeniably the strain was telling on her—she was even a bit haggard, her cheeks thinner, her crow's-feet more in evidence, while Mildred, the hotter the pace, but bloomed the more.

Mildred was a puzzle. After the fortnight, she knew no more of her than within the first hour. The admirable surface was wholly opaque. But somehow occultly, Louise had begun to fear that this girl, outwardly all her father's daughter, was inwardly mean and narrow, as her mother had been. Notwithstanding, she held gallantly to her purpose, putting away her intuitions as the promptings of jealousy. She was jealous, for the first time in her life, not of Mildred and Waring, but of youth and the brightness of youth. She had been defrauded of it—therein lay the sting. Nothing could ever make up for the defrauding. This jealousy cast an illumination backward, by which she saw her coquetties truly—they were the outreach of womanhood, cribbed and thwarted, for its unquestioned birthright.

It was scant solace to recall that, if she had played with hearts, it had been commonly to their salvation. She began to wish inexpressibly that she could wipe out everything—even the memory so long and so fondly cherished. Waring would go with all the rest—but if he came, when there were only fair white pages—she always stopped short, refusing to let herself think further. Waring must marry Mildred; she would queen it so magnificently in his home and heart. She had fascinated him, beyond a doubt; in fancy, Louise heard herself setting him free of nebulous bonds, and bidding him go and find happiness.

It was odd, but, after the first perfunctory references, there had been no mention of Mildred's father. She spoke often rather casually of her mother—how her hair had turned white in the week that she lost her other chil-

dren—her thrift, her ambitions, for the sole daughter left. Louise could not help wondering if there had been family discords.

It took her wholly aback to have Mildred say to her one stormy night, as they sat together in front of the fire, after their dinner guests had gone: "Father will be here in a day or so. I hope you will be very glad to see him."

"Of course, I'm never glad to see an old friend. So vain a person, you know, does not like to be dated back," Louise said, trying hard for her usual lightness, though her heart beat fast.

Mildred laughed, a low, lazy laugh, that had yet a spice of hardness.

"Until I met you," she said, fixing a keen gaze upon Louise, "I wondered and wondered why I had never heard a word of you—until after mother died. Now I understand perfectly."

"I—do not understand," Louise said, with dignity, sitting up the least bit, and shading her face with her fan.

Mildred shook a finger at her, saying: "Don't you? Dear me! I hate to think you're fibbing. Maybe this will enlighten you: As soon as it was settled that I should come up here, father charged me to find out everything about you—and write him word, the very first thing. He's been mighty sensible for a widower—it is two years since mother was taken. I knew it was not grief, though he was good to her always, in spite of her nagging and jealousy—"

"Excuse me, but I had rather not hear such things," Louise said, rising.

Mildred got up likewise.

"You're the funniest woman," she said. "Why, I believe you put on airs even before yourself. What's the harm of speaking truth all in the family this way? I know, as well as if father had told me, there was something between you two. And I don't believe either of you has forgotten."

Louise stood, white-faced, lighting the bedroom candles with hands that shook. She hated them for shaking—as she hated any betrayal of the tumult in her soul. "Good night," was all she

could trust herself to say, but Mildred barred escape.

"I'm sorry, if you mind so much," she said. "But I thought you ought to know I knew. I should know—even if father had said nothing. A woman must have a mighty good reason to let Mr. Waring slip through her fingers as you did; I saw, first thing, he was daffy about you, and it made me almost hate you. You see I made my mind up to marry him, the minute I knew he was the man the papers had been so full of last summer, when he made a million."

Louise did not sleep that night. She was more than ever haggard next day, but Mildred showed the bloom and innocence of childhood. She had got back her creamy surface. There was no trace of last night's shrewish insight. But glancing stealthily at her from time to time, Louise saw in her face, heard in her voice, lines and tones coming straight from the mother she evidently did not mourn. To lie thus unmourned by the child for whom she had travailed, toiled, hoped, and schemed, seemed to Louise too hard a punishment, even for the dead woman, and for the first time she pitied her.

The pity was but a fleeting thought—other things impended. Waring, for example—he had sent a line by special messenger, saying:

Coming at one. Must see you alone for two minutes. Important.

Louise had smiled wearily as she read it; she understood perfectly the important thing. He wanted to be set free, and would say so straightforwardly. She was glad, of course; less glad than she would have been yesterday. But Mildred might have much to make up for her spiritual defects; moreover, she was so beautiful, so strong, so alive, the very incarnation of youth. And, in spite of her hardness, she was no worse than other women. Nine in ten of them, Louise well knew, narrowed everything in life to the personal equation. Had not she herself done it in planning Waring's enthrallment? Had she not taken him away from one woman for her own diversion, and his

happiness, and tried to bestow him upon another?

It was impossible now to interfere, to utter even one warning word. After all, he was a man, able to look out for himself. Then a sickening sense came to her, that in case of a woman exceeding fair, no man is fully able to look out for himself. Did not Thackeray say a woman without a humpback and a cast in the eye could marry whom she pleased? Mildred pleased to marry John Waring. What was there for Louise but to step aside and give the pair her blessing?

Perhaps such thinking, perhaps also something deeper, dulled her eyes, waned her cheeks, as she walked up and down the terrace, peering at crocuses struggling up through the turf. She saw them only with the outer eye; within, there were visions of storm and stress. She was roused from them by a heavy step approaching. Turning, she found herself face to face with a tall man, heavy and florid, who held out his hand, saying with a smile: "I hope you are glad to see me, if I am ahead of my schedule."

Louise gasped. Even the eyes—the blue, blue eyes—were altered. The lashes were scant, the brows overhanging them, once so fine, heavy and beetling. There was even a squint perceptible, and many wrinkles at the corners, though the rest of the face was as smooth as it was weather-beaten. Here stood a man who had faced and rioted in the elements, becoming himself, in the conflict, elemental. The voice was throaty, the hand that clasped hers heavy and hot. He looked down at her with a long, measuring glance, saying half to himself: "How time changes us! I hardly think we would have known each other anywhere else."

"No," Louise said, smiling faintly. It was her turn to look—she swept him narrowly all over with her most penetrating glance. "But you're a wicked, wicked person to say so," she ran on, gathering courage from the sound of her own even voice. "Except, of course, about yourself—you have a daughter to prove you ancient. I'm

different. If you had had the least consideration——"

"You have not changed one way. I see you still turn everything into a joke," Galbreth Lane interrupted.

Louise shrugged faintly. "Why shouldn't I?" she asked. "You know we women must either laugh or frown; and laughter is ever so much more becoming."

He looked faintly uneasy. "May I walk with you a bit?" he asked.

She nodded. Together they went along the grassed rise, down the steps, and on to the verge of the shrubberies. Louise felt half suffocated. Was there method in it? It was the same walk she had taken with Galbreth Lane when unspokenly she had put away his love. He was silent until they came to the end of the path. Turning there, he looked back at the house, then let his eyes trail along the green spaces about it, and at last rest full upon its mistress.

"You've got grit—to have lived on here, where everything must remind you," he said, breathing quickly. Then lamely: "I mean, of course, reminds you of—of your trouble—with poor Arthur—and—your great loss."

Louise shivered—less at his crass revelation of conceit than at his clumsy evasion. "Let's not talk of—such things—please," she said gently. "Tell me, instead, all about yourself."

"There's not much to tell—you've seen my daughter," Lane answered, a worshipful inflection at the last word.

Louise laughed softly. "That is no fair answer," she said. "Do you mean that Mildred is the crown of your existence? Or that we two must have gossiped so there is nothing left you to say?"

"Perhaps a little of both," Lane answered, smiling. "She is a girl of a million. We were wrapped up in her—both my wife and I. My main concern in life now is to see her married. Married to the right man. It would be mighty hard to see her make—a mistake."

"You may trust her not to make a mistake," Louise said sympathetically.

Lane looked at her hard, drew a long breath, opened his lips, but closed them again, and, after a silent half minute, plunged headlong into a recital of his affairs.

He had prospered—oh, yes; more than he deserved; had been honored, too, they had sent him to the senate of his State over his own protest, and had tried in like fashion to force him into Congress. But his wife had interfered. Lucky she had done it; the children died the very next winter. Three fine lads. Here his voice broke. But in almost the next breath he had become discursive, even semi-oratorical.

Louise heard him, shuddering inly, her mind, her heart, alternating betwixt chaos and blankness.

At last she was facing real tragedy—sight of her cherished idol with disoiled eyes. As Galbreth Lane talked on, and on, the idol crumbled; yet inly she laughed outright. He was preparing the way, showing her what treasures he was about to offer her—offer in full faith that they would be thankfully accepted. He did not name Waring outright, but now and again let fall something which revealed to her quick intelligence that Mildred had made no half-confidences. She discerned further a chastened rejoicing in the wisdom, the kindness of Divine Providence, which, after giving him his honors, his ducats, his daughter, had opened the way to his early love.

Her cheeks began to burn a hot, angry scarlet. To think, only last week she had kissed withered flowers of his giving, the while she vowed faith to the very end! A rush of saving sanity quenched the hot scarlet. There was no shame in keeping faith with Love—even though she had miscalled it by this egregious egotist's name.

Noting her quick paling, Lane said solicitously: "Maybe I'm tiring you. Hadn't we better go find Mildred?"

"You go—and surprise her. I think she is in the parlor. The window is open—the one you always came in by," Louise answered, darting away before he could reply.

The hall clock struck one as she

gained the west door. Half-stealthily, she ran to the hall. She must see John Waring before facing father and daughter—with her world reeling thus about her, his image had somehow a comforting sense of strength and stay. Her heart sank to hear through the half-shut door of the parlor a triple strand of talk—Mildred's treble, under-voiced by her father's booming bass, and Waring's well-bred monotone tangling in between.

The talk ought to have masked her footfalls; but love has a fine ear. John came quickly to her, caught her hand, and led her inside. Still holding fast her hand, he said, smiling up at Galbreth Lane:

"I hope you'll help me make this un-

reasonable person listen to reason. I have to go abroad the first of next week. Oughtn't she to go with me, considering we have been engaged ever and ever so long?"

Mildred caught her breath. Her father changed color, but being no coward, found voice to say: "No doubt, sir! But I learned many years ago that that lady never listens to reason."

"How well you remember," Louise said, looking straight at him, a world of meaning in her gaze. "Reason is tiresome, even hateful. But reasons—ah! They are quite another thing. One always listens to them when they are advanced by the Only Man. I know I can't be ready in time, John—but we can go quite as well without."



THE VOICE IN THE WOOD

THERE is silence on the hill,
Wind and rain are sleeping,
Fields and hedges all are still,
But in the wood is weeping.

Rain is cradled in a cloud,
Wind in dreams is straying.
Hidden in the wood's green shroud
Is sorrow past all staying.

Desolation, dread as death,
From the dark is crying.
Hope, with bitter, stabbing breath,
In the wood is dying.

Hair close-bound and wings close-furled,
Rain and wind lie sleeping.
Through the silence of the world
Love betrayed goes weeping.

ETHEL CLIFFORD.



THE SACRIFICE

BY OWEN OLIVER



HAVE told you a dozen times that I won't marry you, Mary," said Lascelles.

He leaned forward to say it, and one of the pillows dropped from his armchair.

Mary Graham picked up the pillow and restored it to its place. He was forty and she was twenty-two, but she looked at him much as a nurse might look at a sick and fretful child.

"Because you do not realize that I really wish it," she commented.

"Wish it loving another man!" he rejoined.

"Yes," she owned steadily. "I shall leave that behind. You have loved other women in your time."

"That is scarcely to the point, Mary. I don't love them now."

"Of course it isn't to the point! But you won't listen to what is. I want to put the case clearly, and prevent any misunderstanding."

"There is none," he asserted.

"I will state the case," she said in the manner of a high schoolmistress—which, in fact, she was—"and then we shall see. Six months ago we were engaged. I should not have been engaged to you, if I had not liked you considerably. I did, and I do. You admit that?"

"You have proved it, my kind, little nurse." He smiled faintly at her.

"When we were engaged, we seemed quite suitable——"

"Except that I was twenty years older."

"Eighteen," she corrected precisely. "I didn't mind your age. You are younger than I in many ways."

"Yes, grave little person."

"Anyhow, I knew your exact age, and did not object to it. So that is not to the point. Five weeks ago I came to you and told you that since Harry Parsons had returned I had found out that—that I had a great regard for him."

"And that is true, Mary."

"Yes. I said that I would try to forget it, if you wished. I honestly meant that, George. You elected to set me free."

"You knew that I should."

"Yes. But I did not tell you with that object. I did not expect to marry him, in any case. I do not think you believed me when I told you so; but it was the fact. He is not in a position to marry me. His sister has lost her money. He is poor and cannot keep her and a wife, too. She has the first claim. She has been a mother to him and more; sacrificed her life to him. I do not think there is a woman I admire so much as Agnes Parsons. I told you just to be honest. I thought you ought to know. People say that I treated you badly, George; but they do not understand me."

"Ah, well, Mary, I do. You got served twice, when conscience was shared out."

She smiled a solemn smile.

"Then I should be a better judge than you. As soon as our engagement was broken, you fell ill. People think that it was my fault."

"Nonsense! I had been queer for

a long time. You know you didn't cause my illness."

"I hope not; but I made it worse. I came to you directly you were ill; and I have done my best to make you well; and I am doing my best now. You want me, George."

"I should want you," he said, "if you wanted me; wanted me more than any one else."

"I want you most of any one I can have. I can't have Harry; and that being so, I am content to try to make you happy; very resolute to do so. That isn't enough, you think? Well, George, I am determined that you shall make me happy. Isn't that enough?"

She laid her hand on his arm.

"No, dear; no. You are very honest and very good, and I dare say I could make you happy to an extent. I want you to be happier than that—happy with the man you love, Mary."

"That cannot be."

"Not at present, perhaps; but in a few years. You are both young, and—"

"George, I will *not* marry him while you are alive and single. I was pledged to you. I have nearly killed you. It wasn't the illness that kept you back, the doctor said, but your general depression. I was the cause of that, I don't care what you say. I could not marry him, and I will not, while you want me; and while you are unmarried I will never believe that you do not. I swear it by—by my double share of conscience. You know that I shall keep that vow. Now, dear fellow, if I am a sacrifice, as you make out, I am a very willing one. Will you take it?"

"God bless you, child, no!" he cried. "I'd sacrifice myself a hundred times before I'd sacrifice you. No, dear!"

The girl sighed.

"I think you will," she told him, "when you find that I keep my word. Harry knows. He is trying to find a post away from here. Well, I won't worry you any more. Good-by."

She put her hand on his hair for a moment, and stroked it gently. Then she went. Lascelles laughed ruefully.

Even illness and trouble could not take away his habit of humor.

"She means it," he reflected. "Poor little double-conscienced Mary! While I'm alive! It's a pity I am, perhaps!" He sighed. "And unmarried. Nothing but a sacrifice will satisfy Mary's puritan soul. I'll be the sacrifice. I'll marry!"

He rang for the nurse, and asked for pencil and paper; and sent a note to Miss Parsons, Harry's sister.

She came the next afternoon; a bonny, well-favored lady of four and thirty; refined, courteous, kindly, and reasonable; and like Lascelles, possessed of the saving grace of humor. She seemed to bring an atmosphere of security with her.

"I was coming to see you in a day or two, anyhow," she told him, "as soon as you received visitors; but I am glad to come sooner. How are you, you poor fellow?"

"I'm all right," he said, "and better for seeing you. It's rather an awkward subject that I want to talk about."

"Harry and Mary, of course. I think I know what you want to say. It is no use, Mr. Lascelles. I can't influence them any more than you can. They are right up to a point. You have a claim on Mary; and I have a claim on Harry. They are wrong in not realizing that we should be happier in surrendering our claims than in enforcing them. But they will never give up the idea of sacrifice. They are, by nature, candidates for martyrdom." She laughed, and shook her head.

"*You* shouldn't laugh at martyrs," he said. "You sacrificed all your girlhood for that boy."

"Just as you would sacrifice yourself for Mary," she rejoined. "Well, they will not accept our sacrifices; and we can't make them."

"I thought, if you threw them together all you could—Young blood is young blood!"

"As if I hadn't tried! I realized entirely that you would wish it. Although we haven't been closely acquainted, I know you well enough for that. Yes, I've tried. It's no use.

They have made up their minds that it is Mary's duty to marry you; and that it is Harry's duty to keep single on my account. They encourage each other in the martyrdom; and take a dismal pleasure in it! They won't marry each other, whatever we say. The best thing you can do is to get a license, and marry Molly, and take her away. Do you know, I think she'll be pretty happy? She has made up her obstinate little mind to be; and she likes you; and she'll like you a deal more. You are pretty easy to like, I think." Miss Parsons smiled encouragingly. "Harry will get over it, too. He's very keen on his business, and he'll get on. The boy's bright. I think they'll be fairly happy, Mr. Lascelles."

"Not so happy as they might have been," he said; and Miss Parsons made a quick movement with her hands.

"Ah!" she said softly. "Who is? Not an old maid and an old bachelor! But we put up with it. No one would describe you and me as 'miserable sinners.'"

"We put up with it," he assented, "but we don't want them to put up with it. If you could make Harry happy, you'd sacrifice a good deal, I think, Miss Parsons?"

"Everything but right," said Miss Parsons. "Perhaps a little of that!" She laughed unsteadily.

"Not much of *that*, I think. I wonder if my proposal goes beyond your limit?"

"My limit is much the same as yours, I fancy, Mr. Lascelles. I should not run much risk in adopting your standard of honor."

"Then let me put my proposal to you. Mary will not marry Harry while I am alive and single. Harry will not marry her while you are unprovided for. I must marry; and you must be provided for. There is an obvious way to do both. We have great respect for each other, and—may I say some liking?"

Miss Parsons clasped and unclasped her hands; turned a trifle red; and then a trifle pale.

"It sounds an impertinent sugges-

tion," Lascelles owned, "but—I wonder if you have ever considered marrying on Harry's account?"

"I have considered it," Miss Parsons admitted frankly, "since I lost my money. It overstepped my limit. I could put up with it myself; but I couldn't do a man the wrong of pretending to love him."

"Exactly. That is my position toward a woman; but in our case there would be no pretense. That was one reason why I suggested that we should marry each other. It would bring the case within my limit. I don't know that it would bring it within my courage, if the lady were any one else. Anyhow, I can't go to any one else, and make out that I want to marry her for the proper reason; and no one else would marry me for the true one. It is you or nobody. Will you do it, with your eyes open, to save Harry and Molly?"

"To save Harry and Molly," Miss Parsons repeated thoughtfully. "With my eyes open. Very wide open, Mr. Lascelles! We are neither of us young, and we both realize that we are risking very great unhappiness. It will hurt us both; and it will hurt us most to hurt each other. You have reckoned all that?"

"Yes," he said, "I have reckoned it. Sometimes I think it will hurt *you* horribly. If it does, it will hurt me. If it doesn't, it won't; not a bit! You see, I've always had a great opinion of you; and, upon my word, I can't look upon marriage with you as an unpleasant thing—if it could be not unpleasant to *you*. Can't you think of it like this? You want to get married for Harry's sake; and there's a man who wants to marry you for a similar reason. You and he are old acquaintances; you are both kindly and considerate and reasonable; you are both lonely; you have both missed some things in life. You will both try to be good comrades, and help each other to enjoy the rest of the journey. Can't we look at it so?"

Miss Parsons smiled faintly.

"My dear friend," she said, "it would never occur to us to look at it in any

other way, but—I don't know—I really don't know. The children will guess why we do it."

"Very likely; but after we've done it they'll feel free to marry each other. For their sakes?"

Miss Parsons sighed, and shook her head.

"And, on my part," he added, "with every anticipation of finding the best comrade I have ever had."

"If we were just going to make friends," Miss Parsons said, "I should anticipate that; but I fear that the conditions preclude it. We shall never be able to forget that the comradeship was an afterthought. Well, in a way, it's worse for you. You love Mary; and I'm not in love with any one—now."

"You have been?"

"Lots!" She laughed with her usual good humor. "Oh, well! If I'm going to be a sacrifice, I'll be a cheerful one. Very well, Mr. Lascelles. You have been sincere, I hope, in what you have said about your esteem for me, but I am sure you would be sincere."

"I have been very sincere," he said.

He took both her hands and pressed them.

"Comrade," he said.

"Thank you," said Miss Parsons. "Yes, as good comrades we shall be very careful not to humiliate each other by letting our motives be suspected."

"Nobody is likely to suspect them," Lascelles said, "except those precious youngsters!"

"And they certainly will," said Miss Parsons.

They did. In fact, they were extremely angry. They interviewed their seniors separately and together, argued with them, pleaded with them, stormed at them. Mary even wept, and she was a girl not given to tears.

"You are sacrificing yourselves for us," she declared.

"Well," said Lascelles, "I've found a delightful form of sacrifice!"

"You are doing a thing you hate!" Harry told his sister.

And then she lost her temper with

him for the first and last time in her life.

"Never dare to speak to me like that again," she cried, with her eyes flashing. Her anger made her look very young and pretty, Lascelles thought. "It would be impossible to hate the idea of being a comrade to—to George."

She had not called Lascelles by his Christian name before. He drew her arm in his.

"Or to you," he said. "Charming lady!"

"Oh!" Molly pleaded tearfully. "My dears! Don't be angry. You would be the best comrades in the world, if you loved each other; but you *don't*! We know. You are just sacrificing yourselves because you think that it will make us marry each other—Harry and me."

"Of course you will," Lascelles said. "You don't propose to be such young idiots as to consider yourselves tied to us after we're married, I suppose?"

"We—" both began at once; but he held up his hand.

"Now, don't make any more foolish vows," he advised. "Agnes and I are going to be married, whatever you vow, and whatever you don't. In fact"—he pressed Miss Parsons' arm—"I am going for the license to-morrow. Am I not—Agnes?"

Miss Parsons' arm trembled in his. He had not previously mentioned a day; but she felt that any wavering before the young people would be fatal.

"Yes," she assented.

"It will be for next week," Lascelles added. He pressed Miss Parsons' arm again.

"Saturday," she said faintly.

"Harry!" Mary cried. "Harry! We can't let them! We can't let them give their *whole lives* for us! We'd better do anything. We—" She looked at him with her eyes brimming with tears.

"Harry!"

"Heaven knows!" the boy cried. "Mary and I wanted each other badly enough; a jolly sight more than you guessed, either of you. Only—only you always brought me up to—to try to do right, sis, and—Molly's made that way."

She—she—God bless her! The sacrifice *we* wanted to make was *right*. The sacrifice you two are going to make isn't. We'll take our happiness from you, since you force us to, and—thank you more than I can ever say."

"Or I," said Mary.

"Of course," Harry went on, "we shall wait till I can do something for Agnes. I'll work like"—he paused for a word—"like a horse! But we'll be engaged now. So—so you two needn't get married."

"You dears!" cried Mary; and she hugged and kissed them both. It was difficult to recognize the staid, sensible little schoolmistress in the flushed, excited girl.

Lascelles pulled his mustache and muttered something inaudible. Miss Parsons sat down suddenly.

Presently he laughed. So did Miss Parsons. They had the saving grace of humor, as has been said.

"You might be polite to each other, and dissemble your relief," said Mary. "You know you really are glad, but—"

"Oh!" said Lascelles. "Go out of this, and dissemble *your* relief, you—you young idiots!"

They went.

"And I had hoped against hope that they did like each other," Mary said mournfully in the passage.

"Well," said Harry, "*we* do, don't we, Molly?"

"Oh! My boy!" cried the grave little schoolmistress. "They think I'm so sensible! And I'm not the least bit sensible about you!"

Lascelles and Miss Parsons were very silent when the young people had departed. He looked out of the window. He saw a reflection of her there, graceful and girlish. She seemed to have grown young during their pleasant companionship. She sat very, very still.

"You know," he said at last, "you are prettier than Mary. I always thought you the prettiest woman in the place. I—something's gone out of my life, Agnes. It—it's never had anything in it to compare with this week with you."

"Except your engagement to Mary," said Miss Parsons. Her voice lacked its usual roundness. Her lips were white.

"Except nothing!" cried Lascelles. He strode over to the sofa. "You were ready to be a sacrifice to them, Agnes. Be a sacrifice to me. I want you."

"Do you?" said Miss Parsons. "Do you? Oh-h-h!"

Harry and Molly were relieved to find them in friendly conversation when they returned.

"What shall we say when people ask about your engagement?" Mary inquired.

"You can say that it will terminate on Saturday week," Lascelles told her, "in the parish church, by special license."

"Oh!" Mary screamed. "And you weren't—sacrifices to us at all!"

"We *were*," said Lascelles, "but now we are sacrifices to each other."

"The sacrifice that men and women are born to," said Miss Parsons.



JUPITER ANN

BY ELEANOR H. PORTER



It was only after serious consideration that Miss Prue had bought the little horse, Jupiter, and then she had changed the name at once.

For a respectable spinster to drive any sort of horse was bad enough in Miss Prue's opinion; but to drive a heathen one!

To replace "Jupiter" she considered "Ann" a sensible, dignified, and proper name, and "Ann" she named him, regardless of age, sex, or "previous condition of servitude." The villagers accepted the change—though with modifications; the horse was known thereafter as "Miss Prue's Jupiter Ann."

Miss Prue had said that she wanted a safe, steady horse; one that would not run, balk, or kick. She would not have bought any horse, indeed, had it not been that the way to the post office, the store, the church, and everywhere else, had grown so unaccountably long—Miss Prue was approaching her sixtieth birthday. The horse had been hers now a month, and thus far it had been everything that a dignified, somewhat timid spinster could wish it to be. Fortunately—or unfortunately, as one may choose to look at it—Miss Prue did not know that in the dim recesses of Jupiter's memory there lurked the smell of the turf, the feel of the jockey's coaxing touch, and the sound of a triumphant multitude shouting his name; in Miss Prue's estimation the next deadly sin to treason and murder was horse racing.

There was no one in the town, perhaps, who did not know of Miss Prue's

abhorrence of horse racing. On all occasions she freed her mind concerning it; and there was a report that the only lover of her youth had lost his suit through his passion for driving fast horses. Even the county fair Miss Prue had refused all her life to attend—there was the horse racing. It was because of all this that she had been so loath to buy a horse, if only the way to everywhere had not grown so long!

For four weeks—indeed, for five—the new horse, Ann, was a treasure; then, one day, Jupiter remembered.

Miss Prue was driving home from the post office. The wide, smooth road led straight ahead under an arch of flaming gold and scarlet. The October air was crisp and bracing, and unconsciously Miss Prue lifted her chin and drew a long breath. Almost at once, however, she frowned. From behind her had come the sound of a horse's hoofs, and reluctantly Miss Prue pulled the right-hand rein.

Jupiter Ann quickened his gait perceptibly, and lifted his head. His ears came erect.

"Whoa, Ann, whoa!" stammered Miss Prue nervously.

The hoofbeats were almost abreast now, and hurriedly Miss Prue turned her head. At once she gave the reins an angry jerk; in the other light carriage sat Rupert Joyce, the young man who for weeks had been unsuccessfully trying to find favor in her eyes because he had already found it in the eyes of her ward and niece, Mary Belle.

"Good morning, Miss Prue," called a boyish voice.

"Good morning," snapped the woman, and jerked the reins again.

Miss Prue awoke then to the sudden realization that if the other's speed had accelerated, so, too, had her own.

"Ann, Ann, whoa!" she commanded. Then she turned angry eyes on the young man. "Go by—go by! Why don't you go by?" she called sharply.

In obedience, young Joyce touched the whip to his gray mare; but he did not go by. With a curious little shake, as if casting off years of dull propriety, Jupiter Ann thrust forward his nose and got down to business.

Miss Prue grew white, then red. Her hands shook on the reins.

"Ann, Ann, whoa! You mustn't—you can't! Ann, please whoa!" she supplicated wildly. She might as well have besought the wind not to blow.

On and on, neck and neck, the horses raced. Miss Prue's bonnet slipped and hung rakishly above one ear. Her hair loosened and fell in straggling wisps of gray to her shoulders. Her eyeglasses dropped from her nose and swayed dizzily on their slender chain. Her gloves split across the back and showed the white, tense knuckles. Her breath came in gasps, and only a moaning "whoa—whoa" fell in jerky rhythm from her white lips. Ashamed, frightened, and dismayed, Miss Prue clung to the reins and kept her straining eyes on the road ahead.

On and on down the long straight road flew Jupiter Ann and the little gray mare. At door and window of the scudding houses appeared men and women with startled faces and upraised hands. Miss Prue knew that they were there, and shuddered. The shame of it—she, in a horse race, and with Rupert Joyce! Hurriedly she threw a look at the young man's face to catch its expression; and then she saw something else: The little gray mare was a full half head in the lead of Jupiter Ann!

It was then that a strange something awoke in Miss Prue—a fierce new something that she had never felt before. Her lips set hard, and her eyes flashed a sudden fire. Her moaning "whoa—whoa" fell silent, and her

hands loosened instinctively on the reins. She was leaning forward now, eagerly, anxiously, her eyes on the head of the other horse. Suddenly her tense muscles relaxed, and a look that was perilously near to triumphant joy crossed her face—Jupiter Ann was ahead once more!

By the time the wide sweep of driveway leading to Miss Prue's home was reached, there was no question of the result, and well in the lead of the little gray mare Jupiter Ann trotted proudly up the driveway and came to a panting stop.

Flushed, disheveled, and palpitating, Miss Prue picked her way to the ground. Behind her Rupert Joyce was just driving into the yard. He, too, was flushed and palpitating—though not for the same reason.

"I—I just thought I'd drive out and see Mary Belle," he blurted out airily, assuming a bold front to meet the wrath which he felt was sure to come. At once, however, his jaw dropped in amazement.

"Mary Belle? I left her down in the orchard gathering apples," Miss Prue was saying cheerfully. "You might look for her there." And she smiled—the gracious smile of the victor for the vanquished.

Incredulously the youth stared; then, emboldened, he plunged on recklessly:

"I say, you know, Miss Prue, that little horse of yours can run!"

Miss Prue stiffened. With a jerk she straightened her bonnet and thrust her glasses on her nose.

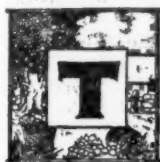
"Ann has been bad—very bad," she said severely. "We'll not talk of it, if you please. I am ashamed of her!" And she turned haughtily away.

And yet—

In the barn two minutes later, Miss Prue patted Jupiter Ann on the neck—a thing she had never done before.

"We beat 'em, anyhow, Ann," she whispered. "And, after all, he's a pleasant-spoken chap, and if Mary Belle wants him—why—let's let her have him!"

THE WIDOW'S CRUISE



HE liner *Bosphorus*, after a comfortable nap of some eight days alongside the company's wharf at the west end of one of New York's methodically numbered streets, was making a reluctant effort to tear herself from a hospitable continent and face an unfriendly ocean on another voyage to Liverpool.

Suddenly, there was a swirl and an eddy amid the crowd upon the wharf. Down a line of people, there sped a woman—a young woman.

Passengers hanging over the rail regarded her progress with interest. They were chiefly males—their wives were down below, engaged in the hopeless task of endeavoring to intimidate stewardesses—and the trim figure and flying feet of the girl—she was little more—attracted their untrammelled admiration. The babble of good-bys ceased, and the storm of waving hats and sticks subsided.

The girl dashed up the gang plank in the very nick of time. In another moment it would have been withdrawn.

A sandy-haired man, in a Harris tweed suit, stretched out a hand to help her, in accents which Harry Lauder might have envied:

"Hey, lassie! Loup!"

And so the girl managed to sail on the *Bosphorus*.

The status of the purser on board an ocean-going passenger steamer

varies inversely with the social proclivities of the captain. If that potentate includes among his characteristics a fondness for light conversation and female society, he gathers together the élite of the passengers at his own table at dinner, and holds levees on the upper bridge in the afternoons; with the result that the purser's opportunities of making himself agreeable are limited to changing greenbacks for sovereigns, and receiving complaints about the quality of the wine. Should the captain, however, chance to be a member of that unaccountable but numerous class of master mariner which objects to being asked ridiculous questions as to what is likely to happen during the voyage, or grows restive at meal times under inquiries as to whether he has been shipwrecked before, or ever seen the sea serpent, then he remains aloft, in some windy and storm-beaten eyrie of his own, descending at intervals to consume furtive chops in his own cabin, and the purser reigns in his stead.

Mr. Percy Chubb, purser of the *Bosphorus*—"Percy the Purser" he was usually called by the habitués of the route—was a prominent figure on board that vessel, for the captain was of a retiring nature, and Percy was eminently the reverse. He it was to whose table important or pernickety passengers were assigned, who organized the daily sweepstake on the ship's run, who supplied incorrect information to lady passengers concerning the direction of the wind and the movements of the heavenly bodies, and de-

cided which of the clergy present on board was most worthy to conduct divine service on the Sabbath.

But his specialty was perhaps the protection of the young and fair. It was his custom every voyage to pick out the most attractive damsel on the ship, and exert himself to deliver her from solitude and ennui—misfortunes to which it is well known that attractive damsels on board ship are specially liable.

On this occasion, he had not far to seek. When the passengers took their places at dinner on the first evening out, he at once noticed the trusting blue eyes and fresh complexion of the heroine of the scene on the wharf that afternoon. He observed further, with disapproval, that the chief steward had placed her at the captain's table, where she was already enduring the open advances of an enterprising citizen of the United States of America. Four places farther down the table, dumb but determined devotion imprinted upon his features, sat the Scottish gentleman who had been the accessory to the lady's embarkation. His name, as revealed by the passenger list, was James Pettigrew, of Strathbungo, near Glasgow. The girl was entered as Mrs. Lollie P. Link, of New Marathon, Pa. Whether wife, widow, or divorcee was as yet undetermined.

Mr. Chubb took the field next morning. By the effective, if unsportsmanlike, device of carrying off Mrs. Link to view portions of the ship not accessible to ordinary passengers, he outdistanced his rivals from the start, and so well did his cause prosper that by high noon he found himself in a state of comfortable complacency. Mrs. Link, whose liquid, almost tearful, eyes rarely left his face as he escorted her from wonder to wonder, and incorrectly explained the mechanism of the dynamo and the cold-storage plant, was evidently what vulgar students of femininity term a "clinger"; and Mr. Chubb, who rather relished being clung to than otherwise, felt that he was in for a pleasant voyage. He was forty-three, with a flabby red face and

protuberant blue eyes. From the gallantry of his bearing, it would have been hard to believe—in fact, very few passengers found it out at all—that he possessed a wife and five children.

Mrs. Link, it appeared, was traveling in charge of the captain, having been confided to his care by an anxious uncle and aunt in the aforesaid New Marathon, in distant Pennsylvania. Further tactful pressure on the part of the purser elicited the intelligence that she had been married at twenty, widowed at twenty-one, and had continued in that state for two years.

Mrs. Lollie also informed him that she had no parents, very few friends—a slight pause—and was now on her way to England to reside with a married sister, who lived at a place called Croydon. Did Mr. Chubb know Croydon? Was it a live place? Had a girl a chance to be gay there? Could she get around to parties, at all? Did Mr. Chubb live in the vicinity? If not, had he friends there? Mr. Chubb, whose wife and family dwelt in the outskirts of Birkenhead, changed the subject, and suggested that Mrs. Link might be more comfortable at his table in the saloon than at the captain's. The lady acquiesced—acquiescence might be described as her forte—and the second evening of her voyage saw her rest from a not altogether inconsolable captain, and confided to the assiduous chaperonage of Percy the Purser.

Not that the marine Adonis was left in undisputed possession of the field. There were many others who "also ran," as they say in the sporting papers.

Among Mrs. Link's admirers was Mr. James Pettigrew, of Strathbungo. His was the most serious case. A Scot does not usually make love unless his intentions are serious, and after two days of portentous hovering and agonized effort Mr. Pettigrew descended upon Mrs. Link's encampment, and, unceremoniously pushing by the others, handed her a box of chocolates which he had been seen purchasing from one of the stewards thirty-six hours before. He then asked Mrs. Link whether she felt sufficiently warm, and on receiv-

ing a demure affirmative, delivered a few helpful and intimate remarks upon the subject of what to wear next the skin, and, finally, unslinging a Thermos flask from his shoulder, offered the ever complaisant Lollie a taste of its contents—some warm and glutinous posset of his own brewing.

Mr. Pettigrew's Thermos flask ultimately became one of the features of the ship. It was the totem of his friendship—the symbol whereby he expressed the gradations of his esteem for his fellows. To be shown it and told its price and history—needless to say it was second-hand, and an astonishing bargain—was the merest everyday courtesy. To be instructed at length in the principles of its construction, indicated that his opinion of you was in the ascendant. To be offered a draught of the sticky mess which it contained announced that you were now of the inner circle, and might count with certainty upon the abiding friendship of James Pettigrew of Strathbungo.

One Atlantic crossing is very like another, and the *Bosphorus*—she was no *Lusitania*, but performed her seven days' run with commendable punctuality and dispatch—plowed her way serenely over the Newfoundland Banks, and might have completed a voyage unmarked by any occurrences more unusual than those already described in this narrative, but for one thing.

Modern science, the mission of which seems to be to seek out the few remaining resting places on this globe's surface, and make the same hum, had established on the upper deck of the *Bosphorus* a small cabin of unpretentious design, from the interior of which there proceeded intermittently sounds which Mrs. Lollie P. Link on first hearing them likened with native aptness to "a buzz saw with the staggers," but which proclaimed to the ear of the initiated the fact that the ship was fitted with a full wireless telegraph installation. And this officious and all-pervading invention succeeded, thanks to the vigilance of Pinkerton's detective agency at one end of the intervening

ether, and the indiscretion of the expansive Mr. Chubb at the other end, in providing the passengers with a real sensation just at the dullest period of the voyage.

It was to Mrs. Link that Percy, the Purser, first communicated his savory morsel of news. She listened with bated breath and gratifying alarm.

"You *don't* say!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Mr. Chubb!" Then: "Is he among the cabin passengers, do you think?"

"That I don't know," replied the purser judiciously. "But if he's a regular swell mobsman, as he is said to be, it's likely enough. On the other hand he may have considered it wiser to travel second-class or even steerage. Anyhow, we have him on board, and they have warned us to be careful. There's no actual warrant out against him at present, it appears, but they've marconigraphed us to try and identify him and keep an eye on him in case they want him at Liverpool."

"Well, Mr. Chubb," replied Mrs. Link, directing a trustful gaze upon the unwarlike figure of the purser, "I'm not squealing any. I trust to you and the ship's company absolutely. But get busy right away, and identify him—*do!* I'm just dying of curiosity to know who he is. Besides, I don't want to be murdered in my little cot!"

Mr. Chubb smiled indulgently.

"You needn't be afraid," he said. "This man isn't likely to hurt anybody. He's no murderer—just the cleverest jewel thief in two continents. If you have any diamonds, though, you had better give them to me to keep."

The widow's mouth drooped immediately. Who would be likely to have given *her* diamonds? she inquired pathetically. Mr. Chubb had better apply to Mrs. Bindleheim. Mrs. Bindleheim was the wife of a diamond merchant of Hatton Garden, London, and invested herself daily with a perfect panoply of jewels.

"That woman," Mrs. Lollie added, "comes on deck every morning dressed like one of Tiffany's windows; and if Mr.—what is the gentleman's name?"

"Mike Tilney—alias Tom Gunning—alias Diamond Dick."

"Well, if he gets his fingers into Mrs. Bindleheim's gripsack," said Mrs. Lollie, not without relish, "I guess a few bushels of stones will stick to them. However, the sooner you find the gentleman, Mr. Chubb, and tie a red label around his neck, why, the sounder Lollie P. Link will sleep, nights."

The news soon leaked out, and caused a flutter of excitement, coupled with not a few unworthy suspicions.

The ship's authorities were not idle. Passenger lists were scanned, individuals were quietly scrutinized, and the inevitable coterie of card players in the smoking room received particular attention. Cautious inquiries elicited the fact that two gentlemen had been doing particularly well at poker. One, a slim, youngish man with an Oriental nose entered on the passenger list as Mr. Gardiner of Minneapolis—had taken a not inconsiderable sum off Mr. James Pettigrew, of Strathbungo, the first evening out, with the result that that outraged Caledonian had avoided the smoking room ever since. The other man, a hard-bitten, gray-haired *chevalier d'industrie* of the most pronounced type—he called himself Major Polesworth—had been winning money systematically and indiscriminately throughout the voyage, but nothing could be alleged against the fairness of his play, his success being reluctantly imputed by his victims to nothing more questionable than a misspent youth.

"I wonder which of you it is," suddenly remarked Mrs. Link to her court one morning, as a steward handed round the intercalary cups of Liebig.

The gentlemen addressed laughed uproariously, as they invariably did when Mrs. Link condescended to pleasantries, but without sincerity. After all, they were complete strangers to one another, and—you never can tell.

The widow went on vivaciously, jestingly accusing one after the other of the men gathered about her, but she suddenly broke off to exclaim:

"Sakes alive! I declare! Just look at Mr. Bindleheim!"

The diamond merchant had appeared on deck, and was climbing with an agility born of extreme agitation to the captain's bridge. There, with prodigality of gesture and audible lamentation he communicated the news which soon ran riot round the ship.

Mrs. Bindleheim, it appeared, had taken to heart an official warning and gone to her cabin after breakfast to make a selection of a few of her most valuable jewels for the ship's strong room. Some one had gone systematically through her jewel case, which had been left lying in the tray of an unlocked trunk. Beside the rifled case lay a receipt for what had been taken. This audacious, but interesting document had been indited—in printed characters—with a fountain pen upon a piece of ship's note paper, and ran:

Taken with thanks:

- 1 Emerald necklace
- 1 Diamond star
- 7 Brooches (assorted)
- 1 Diamond pendant

12 rings (Diamonds, rubies, and sapphires).
N. B. Your diamond tiara is paste; but probably Bindleheim knows this already. I have left it.

The captain coldly informed Mr. Bindleheim that the company could acknowledge no responsibility for his loss, as Mr. Bindleheim had wantonly disregarded a plainly printed intimation, hung in every cabin, to the effect that valuables must be delivered to the purser.

Still, the electrician should be instructed to pick up Liverpool with the Marconi apparatus if possible. Failing that, a telegram should be dispatched to Scotland Yard from Queenstown.

Mr. Bindleheim retired hysterically to his cabin, and that evening Mrs. Bindleheim, looking almost indecently nude, appeared at dinner in a scheme of decoration limited to jet earrings and the paste tiara.

During the next few days almost every man on the ship enjoyed the rather equivocal honor of being positively identified as Mr. Michael Tilney. The rumor went round that the criminal was an expert at disguises, and

consequently the entire ship's company turned itself into a species of private inquiry agency. Amateur detectives made a hobby of coming suddenly round corners in the hope of catching the thief off his guard—possibly with Mrs. Bindleheim's jewels spread out on a camp stool before him—while others lured unsuspecting acquaintances into a strong light and closely scrutinized their complexions.

Mrs. Lollie P. Link's interest in the sensation of the moment was somewhat obscured by what editors call "pressure of other matter." Apart from a sort of general sovereignty with which she had been invested by the male passengers, as a whole, she had made a complete and particular conquest of at least four gentlemen, and the finesse with which she kept them all in play without entangling her lines elicited the grudging professional admiration of the rest of her sex on board. With Percy the Purser she was, as has already been hinted, on terms of a peculiarly intimate and confiding nature. To him she bewailed her extreme boredom with the other three.

Her most difficult task, it was plain, lay in the adequate handling of Mr. James Pettigrew of Strathbungo. That child of nature was obviously in love. Furthermore, having realized that the time allotted to him for conquest was contained within the limits of the ship's voyage, he had mapped out a methodical plan of campaign, and with the awful and remorseless thoroughness of his race was now proceeding to put the same into execution. On the fifth morning of the voyage he had pushed his operations so far as to usurp a seat by Mrs. Link's side at table. He also presented her with chocolates at intervals, and took her for a regular constitutional before meals. By dint of methodical paces he had calculated that nineteen times round the upper deck amounted to a distance of one mile, and he insisted that his beloved should accompany him over the full course morning and evening. He had also bestowed upon her what can only

be described as a perpetual lease of his Thermos flask. The passengers now referred to it as "the widow's cruise."

Meanwhile, the elusive Mr. Tilney, apparently satisfied with his raid upon Mrs. Bindleheim's jewel case, gave no further indication of his presence on board, and the voyage drew to an uneventful conclusion. After a brief call at Queenstown, where no passengers landed, the *Bosphorus* proceeded on her final run.

The night before she arrived at Liverpool the inevitable concert was held in the saloon. Mr. Percy Chubb, supported by a committee composed chiefly of Mrs. Link's following, directed the proceedings, which, in all probability, did not differ materially from those with which Noah and party celebrated the grounding of the Ark.

At its conclusion, two stewards appeared with napkin-covered soup plates, and took up a collection for the Sailors' Orphanage before any one could escape on deck. After this, the company dispersed, but as Mrs. Link showed no disposition to move, several gentlemen remained glued to their seats.

"Well, Mr. Chubb," observed the lady, "how are you going to catch your thief to-morrow?"

Mr. Chubb, who had no idea, replied importantly:

"I expect some of the smartest men from Scotland Yard will be at the landing stage to meet us—men who know Tilney well by sight. They will probably nab him."

"Well, even if they don't get Mr. Mike Tilney they may get the jewels," said Mrs. Link. "I guess the customs people will keep their eyes skinned."

"Perhaps he sent the jewels off at Queenstown," suggested some one.

"It's not likely," said Chubb. "That mail would be very carefully scrutinized. He'll have to get his little haul off the ship at Liverpool, or not at all. And as he is not likely to try to get it passed in his baggage he'll have to carry it on his person, and if he is recognized and searched it will go hard—"

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Chubb,"

exclaimed one passenger indignantly, "that we are liable to be pawed about by these ruffians at Liverpool—to have our pockets actually searched?"

"They'll have to get up very early to find mine," drawled Mrs. Link, "for I haven't had such a thing since these frocks came in."

"They'll be careful, I am sure," said Mr. Chubb soothingly. "They'll go through the second class and steerage people pretty thoroughly, of course, but when it comes to cabin passengers they'll have to discriminate a bit. The company will see to that. They can't afford to have their most desirable patrons annoyed." He turned an amorous and reassuring eye upon the fair Lollie, who blushed prettily.

Mr. Pettigrew had been taking little part in this conversation. He was usually much to the fore when any chance of setting his neighbors right presented itself, but the present occasion found him strangely distraught. His affection for Mrs. Link was obviously causing him to relax his usual grip upon the direction of the universe.

Suddenly he said in a tone which was obviously intended to be ingratiating:

"Mrs. Link, are you for a bit blow with me up on deck?"

The usually compliant Lolly made a little *moue*.

"I'm tired some," she pleaded. "And isn't it rather late? After eleven, surely."

"The hour," replied the remorseless lover, "is ten forty-three. You'll not get your beauty sleep, Mrs. Link, without a dander in the fresh air. But, perhaps, you are not wanting my society!"

This appeal, delivered in a manner which aimed at playfulness, but struck a note of tragic sincerity, had its effect.

"Well, since you put it that way, Mr. Pettigrew," replied the widow, "I'll come with you for a spell. Wait till I go and wrap myself up, and then I shall be ready for your sparkling conversation. Good night, gentlemen!"

She rose and tripped away in charge of the greatly inflated Pettigrew, leav-

ing the rest of the company a prey to what is rightly regarded as the basest of human weaknesses. Only the purser declined to believe himself beaten. Mumbling something about a final glass in the smoking room, he left the saloon and made his way on a prospecting excursion to the upper deck. His progress was accelerated by the spectacle of Mr. James Pettigrew descending the companion, apparently on his way back to his own cabin.

On the upper deck, under the lee of the after funnel, Mr. Chubb espied Mrs. Link. To his unbounded joy she signalled to him to approach.

"Tell me," she began agitatedly, "what time does the ship arrive at Liverpool to-morrow?"

"After luncheon—about three."

"Well, Mr. Chubb, I want to ask a great favor of you. You have been so good to me up till now."

Mrs. Link laid a slender hand on the purser's arm, and gazed up at him beseechingly. She looked very slight and childish in the moonlight. Mr. Percy Chubb's silly, sentimental, but not ungenerous heart dilated.

"You may command me," he said ponderously.

"Well"—the girl cast a hurried glance round her—"I must not be left alone with Mr. Pettigrew again this trip! He is going to propose to me—and—and—I don't love him—and he thinks I do, because—well, I guess I have been most thoughtless and foolish and inconsiderate, Mr. Chubb."

"Not inconsiderate," murmured Mr. Chubb softly, "only overkind."

"Well, whatever I have been," said Mrs. Link, with decision, "I've led the poor man on, and that's a cinch. He'll make trouble if I refuse him—he's that sort. He began to propose just now, so I said I was feeling kind of cold, and he vamoosed below for that eternal Thermos flask of his. Here he comes! Don't leave me until I'm safe into my cabin to-night. And to-morrow morning, if you are the good, kind Mr. Chubb I know you are, you'll take charge of poor me after breakfast, and keep me in your pocket until that red-

headed horror has been safely mailed to bonny Scotland!"

There was no time for further confidences, for Mr. Pettigrew and the Thermos flask were coming up the companion together. Mr. Chubb, feeling like a Galahad in brass buttons, tenderly squeezed his protégée's hand and turned with an airy greeting to Mr. Pettigrew. He relentlessly accompanied the pair for the rest of their promenade, the uninterrupted and continuous view of Mr. Pettigrew's shoulder, with which he was favored, being more than compensated for by the grateful glances which reached him at frequent intervals from beneath Mrs. Link's curly lashes.

Next morning the purser undertook his new duties with a thoroughness which would have roused the warmest eulogies of any less biased critic of the performance than Mr. James Pettigrew, of Strathbungo. After breakfast he lingered by the lady's side, so long that Mr. Pettigrew, who was beginning to exhibit symptoms of homicidal mania, was moved to inquire with more justification than delicacy how much the company paid him per trip for doing nothing.

Mr. Chubb, turning the other cheek, thanked Mr. Pettigrew for his timely reminder, referred to himself as an overdriven galley slave, and announced that he must now go and sit in his office on deck, exchanging dollar bills for sovereigns. Would Mrs. Link, he wondered, care to come up and check his change for him? Mrs. Link greeted the proposition with cries of delight, saying that she was just longing for something to keep her out of mischief this tedious morning. They brushed past Mr. Pettigrew, and went on deck together. That sorely tried man, faint yet pursuing, followed them, and took up a position in the offing outside the purser's open cabin door, looking rather like *The Great San Philip* in "The Revenge," which, it will be remembered:

Hung upon us like a cloud
From which the thunderbolt will break long
and loud

After luncheon, Liverpool being in sight, the purser took Mrs. Link to the forward part of the ship for the purpose of exhibiting to her his native land. Here they stayed for close on an hour, watching the cosmopolitan crowd of steerage passengers, who were being marshaled for their coming inspection by the port authorities. Presently they were on the Mersey, and it became obvious to the gallant Percy that he might now safely relax his vigil for a time and devote his energies to work for which he was paid. He left his charge embarked upon a series of tender farewells with other members of her suite, comfortably conscious that these would keep her fully occupied, to the exclusion of Mr. James Pettigrew, until the *Bosphorus* was berthed.

At last the great liner was securely warped into the landing stage. Among the crowd which watched the process stood a middle-aged, sharp-featured man with a peculiarly quick and penetrating glance. He was clean-shaven, slightly grizzled, and wore his hat at a certain angle. At first sight you would have taken him for an English lawyer of sporting proclivities. His name was Killick, and he was one of the main-springs of that great organization which has its centre in Scotland Yard. Beside him stood a subordinate, and scattered through the crowd were others—unobtrusive individuals known as plain-clothes men.

The passengers began to file down two great gangways, Killick scrutinized the stream with an eye that took in every face, every trick of voice and gesture.

"Spotted him?" inquired his subordinate in a low tone.

Mr. Killick shook his head.

"Seen nobody like him yet," he said. "He is a terror at faking himself. I've seen him four times in the last seven years, to my knowledge, and he's never been the same man twice. Well, that's all the saloon passengers. The second class and steerage can keep till these two trains get off. Let's try the customs shed."

This cast was slightly more fruitful

in results. Mr. Killick's eye fell on two men whose baggage was being examined. He pointed them out to his companion.

"See those two?" he said. "Tell Dempsey to take a couple of men and arrest them quietly when they pass out of here. I'm afraid it won't be much good, because they're only a couple of ordinary smoking-room sharps I've known for twenty years. Jewels are out of their line. Still, we may as well go over them. They won't make a fuss in any case, because we know too much about them. Off you go! No! Stop!" He drew his breath sharply. "It's all right! I think I've got my man. I thought a back view might be useful."

For the last ten minutes, Mr. Killick's steady gaze had been directed almost continuously upon the doorway through which the passengers were filing out to the station. He had not studied human nature for twenty-five years for nothing, and he knew only too well the difficulty of piercing a disguise when its wearer is a consummate master of facial variety. But however carefully the actor may practice his expression and pose, it is very difficult for him to control his back view. A slightly rolling gait, the inward twist of a heel, even the jerk of an elbow, are features which no false hair or coloring matter can transform.

Framed in the open doorway of the customs shed, silhouetted for the fraction of a second against the afternoon sky, Mr. Killick had suddenly observed a back—the back of one walking rather hurriedly. Killick had only seen that back and that walk four times in his life before, but he recognized them. Swiftly he sped after the figure, but in a moment it was swallowed up in the crowd on the station platform, on each side of which a train was waiting. There was just time to note a rather obtrusive coat of Harris tweed and a deer-stalker cap of homely appearance.

"Keep close," said Killick to his companion.

Meanwhile Percy the Purser had re-

sumed charge of Mrs. Link. He manoeuvred her past officious-looking customs men and installed her in a first-class carriage. Having supplied her with refreshment and literature, he next announced his intention of interviewing the guard on her behalf, a form of ritual which no properly constituted Briton dispatching unprotected beauty to a distance ever fails to observe.

As he elbowed his way through the crowds of passengers and porters he suddenly caught sight of the lowering countenance and red head of Mr. James Pettigrew, of Strathbungo, who was excitedly waving to him from the window of a compartment in the north-bound train.

"Could you give me the loan of a railway key, Mr. Chubb?" he roared, as the purser approached. "Do you carry such a thing? Some doited fool of a porter has me lockit in."

"Afraid I haven't a key, Mr. Pettigrew," said the purser affably. He was not at all sorry to see his rival safely caged. "But can I get you anything? Papers—fruit?"

"You cannot!" bawled Mr. Pettigrew, in frenzied tones. "Man, I'm wanting out!"

"What for?"

"Well"—Mr. Pettigrew, seeing nothing else for it, coyly produced from the seat behind him the ever-ready Thermos flask—"I was wishing to take this to Mrs. Link, over there. I doubted the poor ledly would be cold this long journey, so I had it filled up with hot soup for her after luncheon. And here am I locked in!"

"I'll take it for you," said Mr. Chubb readily.

"No, no!" said Pettigrew. "I'll be getting let out in a minute."

"Suppose the train starts before you do?" suggested the crafty Chubb.

Mr. Pettigrew glared at him ferociously, and Mr. Chubb's suspicion that the Thermos flask was more of an excuse than a reason for a trip to Mrs. Link's compartment, became a certainty. He grasped the flask.

"No trouble, I assure you," he said, making off.

"Tell her I'll be along in a minute," called Mr. Pettigrew desperately, "and that I'm just sending the flask by you in case——"

But the purser was out of hearing.

"A parting gift from an admirer of yours, Mrs. Link!" he said facetiously, a minute or two later, handing that never-failing fountain of sustenance through the carriage window.

"What? That Pettigrew? You *don't* say? Well, that's real sweet of him," exclaimed the lady, "considering the way I've been treating him the last twenty-four hours. Where is he, Mr. Chubb?"

Mr. Chubb pointed out Mr. Pettigrew. He was hanging out of the window of his compartment, anxiously looking in their direction, presumably to see how his gift was being received.

It was plain that he was only prevented from taking a header out of the window by the horizontal brass rod which cut the opening into two halves. Mrs. Link waved her handkerchief consolingly.

At the same moment two men pushed their way through the crowd and approached Mr. Pettigrew's carriage door, and tapped Mr. Pettigrew's arm. That gentleman's attention being drawn by their presence, a conversation ensued. One of the men was grizzled and middle-aged, and looked like an English lawyer of sporting proclivities.

Presently Mr. Pettigrew withdrew his head, and the middle-aged man opened the carriage door. Apparently Mr. Pettigrew had been wrong in supposing it to be locked. Then Mr. Pettigrew stepped out, and accompanied the middle-aged man in the direction of the station offices. The other man followed with Mr. Pettigrew's overcoat and hand luggage.

Stupefaction revealed itself in the Scotsman's mechanical gait; injured innocence was manifest in the defiant pose of his head; outraged dignity glowed red from the back of his neck. He seemed to be swelling visibly. One felt instinctively that there would be a

letter in the *Glasgow Herald* about this to-morrow.

The purser's ample jaw dropped, and he turned to his companion.

"Wh-e-e-ew!" he whistled. "Do you know who that is—that man who has just walked off with Mr. Pettigrew?"

"No. Who is he?"

"That," said Mr. Chubb, with intense and solemn relish, "is Inspector Killick, of Scotland Yard!"

"And has he arrested Mr. Pettigrew?" asked Mrs. Link breathlessly. She was a little pale. Evidently Mr. Pettigrew had not entirely failed to make an impression.

"Well, he's detained him on suspicion, at any rate. So friend Pettigrew is Mike Tilney. He's the very last——"

Mrs. Link broke in.

"Mr. Chubb, it's nonsense! That poor, innocent, blundering creature! Why, he *can't* be the man. Run quick and tell them that he's a respectable passenger—as respectable as—as I am. Hurry!"

Much to Mr. Chubb's relief, the engine gave a warning shriek. The London train was due to start.

"All right, Mrs. Link. I'll do what I can," he said.

The purser shook hands with less fervor than might have been expected at so tender a parting. He was somewhat "rattled" at the spectacle he had just witnessed. He had little doubt that Pettigrew was the guilty man. Killick did not often make mistakes. But he wished to spare Lollie's feelings. The departure of her train was indeed a blessing.

"Good-by, Mrs. Link," he said lamely, as the train began to move. "I'll do all I can. But supposing they find the jewels on him—what then?"

"They won't!" said Mrs. Link, with conviction, readjusting the strap of the Thermos flask, which had slipped down over her shoulder as she leaned from the window. "Good-by, dear Mr. Chubb! Remember me——"

"I shall *always* remem——" began the purser tenderly.

"To your wife!" concluded Mrs. Link.

Percy the Purser reeled heavily off the gliding footboard, and regardless of the arpeggio of farewells which fell upon his ears as the train ran past him, stood gaping in a dazed fashion at the widow's fluttering handkerchief.

The following evening, on the arrival of the day Scottish express at Euston, a young man descended from the dining car, and was affectionately greeted by Mrs. Lollie P. Link, who was waiting on the platform. The man was of medium height, and squarely built. His face was clean-shaven and remarkably mobile. He looked something between a prosperous comedian and a curate.

The pair installed themselves in a swift and silent hansom, and sped toward Piccadilly, holding hands and conversing in lover-like fashion. Presently the gentleman inquired:

"Have you got 'em, dear?"

"You bet!" replied Mrs. Link, whose American accent had miraculously disappeared in the atmosphere of Cockaigne.

She handed to her husband a Thermos flask in a leather case. That gentleman took out the flask and shook it gently. There was a faint rattling sound.

"They've worked a bit loose in the wadding," he said. "But they're all right. I hope you found your soup hot!" he added, with an affectionate smile.

"It was rotten cold, old dear," responded Mrs. Link elegantly. "You must have pretty well bust up that vacuum, or whatever you call the thing that you told 'em all so much about on the voyage."

"I should think I did. You ought to have heard the air fizz in when I first cut the hole in the lining. But I soldered it up again neatly enough, in case they took it into their heads to examine the thing. It was a near shave, too. Do you know they made one man in the customs shed open his kodak?"

"I was so gallantly protected by my

Percy," said the late Mrs. Link tenderly, "that I simply *walked* through those customs people. Percy just waved them off as if I had been royalty. It would have been safer, Mike, if I had kept that flask all the time."

"I don't think so," said Mr. Tilney. "For all I know they had got your description from Pinkerton's, and might have been looking out for you on spec, though they didn't know for certain that you were on board. Besides, I was disguised and you weren't. The great thing was having you to pass the flask on to."

"And Percy to carry it!" added Mrs. Tilney.

"And Percy to carry it, certainly."

"Dear Percy!" murmured Mrs. Link softly. "But tell me, old boy," she continued. "What happened when Killick marched you off? I suppose you had seen him all the time."

"Yes. I caught sight of him in the customs shed, and I saw he was watching me. However, I had plenty of time to send the flask across to you. I had a stroke of luck in catching Percy just at that moment; it was far safer than taking it myself. Then I was marched off to be searched. Lil, it was a game! I called them all the Scotch I knew, and generally played the indignant passenger all round. When they had finished and hadn't found so much as a sleeve-link on me, I got sarcastic. I recommended Killick to give up his present job, and put on his uniform again, and go and direct traffic in a cemetery. I told the official searcher that he was simply throwing himself away, and ought to go and search for the North Pole or something else that he could freeze on to! Oh, it was a dinky ten minutes! Killick nearly had an epileptic fit at the end of it. I could see he was certain it *was* me, but he realized that I was top dog this time. He stuck to it, though, for as the train moved off, and I was hanging out of the window, telling Percy exactly how much damages for illegal arrest I was going to get out of his line, I saw a plain-clothes man get into a carriage at the rear. I slipped him at

Carstairs, and went on to Edinburgh, and if ever he knocks up against me again, I don't suppose he'll recognize Mr. James Pettigrew, of Strathbungo. I was sorry for Killick, though. It was smart of him to spot me, and it must have maddened him to have caught his fish, and then found nothing to hold on by."

"The man I'm sorry for," said Mrs. Tilney, "is poor Percy."

"What, that old fathead! Never mind him."

"He admired me," said Mrs. Tilney gently.

"He did. And I nearly wrung his neck for him!" growled the uxorious Mr. Tilney. "By the way, how much did you lift out of his cash box while you were checking his change yesterday?"

"Nothing," said the girl apologetically.

"Nothing?"

"Well, I collected a good handful, but I put it back, Micky."

"Why in thunder?"

"It seemed so like *stealing*," said Mrs. Tilney, with feminine consistency. "Besides, he would have had to make it good. It isn't as if he could afford it, like the Bindleheims."

"There's something in that," admitted Mr. Tilney. "You're a fair-minded little girl, Lil."

"But I made him jump, for all that," continued Mrs. Tilney, brightening up. "Micky, you should have seen his face when I asked to be remembered to his wife!"

Mr. Tilney stared.

"Lil, you *didn't*!"

"I *did*—just as the train moved out!"

Mr. Tilney surveyed his dazzling helpmeet with the air of everlasting and simple wonder habitual to men who are in the habit of doing business with members of the opposite sex.

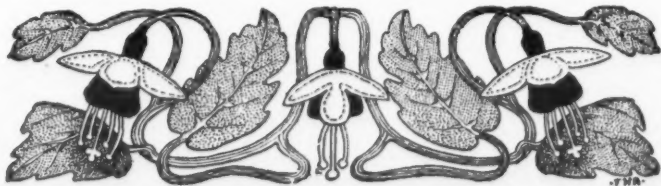
"There was something left out when women were made," he said resignedly. "Here are you, with sufficient nerve and savvy to dodge the whole of Pinkerton's crowd at the wharf at New York, even to the extent of slipping off the ship when they came on board, though you nearly missed your passage in doing so, and you can't resist risking the whole caboodle, all for the fun of seeing a silly-faced philanderer turn green. It was damned *inartistic*, little woman."

"I couldn't help it, Micky," said Mrs. Tilney penitently. "I knew you would say it was out of the picture, but I *had* to! I'm a woman, and I'm your wife, and your wife has had to put up with a good deal this week, my dear. What *brutes* men are—except you!" she concluded almost tearfully.

Mr. Tilney, completely mollified, responded with a tender glance.

"And now," concluded the late Mrs. Link, as the cab drew up at a Gargantuan hotel, "we'll go and enjoy ourselves. It's nice to be oneself again," she added. "I'm fair fed up with waving the Stars and Stripes."

"And I," replied Mr. Tilney, with feeling, "find this Harry Lauder business something cruel. Lil, that man earns all he makes!"



THE SHELTERED LIFE

BY ADELE LEUHRMAN



WITH an involuntary sigh of relief, Mrs. Gwynne rose to leave the small, dingy parlor. The few moments she had waited there had sufficed to recall, in painful contrast with her presence to-day, the occasion of her one former visit. Then she had come, assured and condescending, to welcome with such grace as she could muster, for her son's sake, the obscure young woman he had chosen as his future wife. Now, driven by his accusing eyes, she was here to beg mercy of the woman who had jilted him.

As she followed the servant through the narrow hallway, the darkness and nearness of the walls oppressed her as with a sensation of smothering, and she recalled vividly that this was the effect the house had had on her when she had entered it before, and that then, as now, the feeling of oppression had been swallowed up in one of shocked amazement. Then the wonder had been that a son of hers should ever have found his way into such an environment; now it was that this girl, a way out of it having been opened to her, should have herself deliberately closed the door.

Why had she done it? Mrs. Gwynne's mind dismissed with scorn her son's belief that it was her own attitude which had caused a change in the girl's decision, which had offended her pride. Her pride, indeed! What more did it demand—this insatiable pride? The idea was absurd. Her attitude had not affected *his* decision, she

reflected bitterly, and was it possible that the girl did not know that his father's fortune made him his own master? No! It must be that there was another man. And yet, another man of Walter's wealth, of Walter's class? Surely, such a chance could not have come to such a girl twice. And then, Walter was so sure that there was no one else. It seemed to be the one fact to which, in his despair, his hope still clung.

His despair! Had it not been for that, how thankfully she would have welcomed this break! Her son's choice had been a bitter disappointment to her, and she had opposed it with every available argument and plea. In the first keenness of anger, she had longed fiercely for the power to threaten, but his father's will had placed him beyond the reach of any threat of hers. Her one weapon was his love for her, and she had used it with all the skill and force at her command; then, one day, quite suddenly, she had become—frightened.

A look, a tone—what had it been, that had startled into vibrant life the evil memories that had slept so long; that had frozen the hot words on her lips, and sent her away from him, to be alone—alone with her fear? For it had been fear that had brought her to this house before, though she had hardly realized it then, and it was fear that had brought her now, now, when fate had tossed her the victory as a gift. He was all she had in the world to love her. Let him love whomever he would, if only he would still love her!

The retirement, almost seclusion, of

the room she now entered seemed to argue hopefully for the outcome of the interview. Did not this deliberate provision against interruption imply an admission that there was something to be said? Did it not even confess a wish to hear it said? The mother's faith in the potency of all her son had to offer revived with the thought. Was it not more than likely that the girl's decision had not been as irrevocable as Walter had understood? Youth is so prone to read finality in every sentence. Might she not, at this very moment, be rejoicing at the approach of a reconciliation for which she longed? Who, indeed, when all was said, was she—this Miriam Ware—that she could afford to scorn a Walter Gwynne? Mrs. Gwynne's resentment rose again at thought of the affront which had been put upon her son, and, in his person, on all he stood for; but her indignation died quickly, smothered once more by her sense of sheer bewilderment.

Her troubled gaze wandered nervously around the room, as though with an eager hope of lighting on some familiar object that would restore her bearings. How little she knew of this girl—this woman on whom her boy's happiness seemed to depend so utterly! That which the relationship with the son had demanded of the mother she had done—but no more; the inner protest had been too strong. How she regretted that self-indulgence now as she began anxiously to study her surroundings, impelled by a desperate need to grasp somewhere, somehow, a clue to the character of the girl whose coming she awaited.

The room was plainly a library, and the books, having exhausted the capacity of the huge cases which lined whole stretches of the wall, were piled high upon their tops, and even on the floor beside them. It was clearly the library of a man whose work was done among books, not of one who took his ease there, and Mrs. Gwynne remembered vaguely that Miss Ware's uncle was a writer of some kind, though she had never heard of his books or of him,

until he had approached her consciousness in the wake of his niece.

Suddenly, her roving eye encountered a typewriting machine, placed on a low table near a window, and instantly the surrounding scene became only a setting for this object. This room was where the girl worked! *Worked*. In that one word was focused all the strangeness of the house, all the remoteness of the girl herself. "Her uncle's secretary," Walter had said. Of course, his secretary—his stenographer! It was also as a stenographer that she had been employed in an office in the West. Then her mother had died, and she had come East to this uncle.

The mental picture that these facts had called up to Mrs. Gwynne at their first hearing rose again; the half dozen young women who bent over machines like this in the office of her attorneys. She had noticed them in passing to an inner room, and they had seemed as much a part of the instruments before them as the lettered keys on which their fingers played.

The disarrangement of the alphabet which now struck her eye seemed only the reflection of her mental condition; tradition and convention shuffled wantonly out of their proper order. As she turned back to the room, it seemed to her excited sense to reek of a personality strange and unsympathetic. It had been, she believed, largely the charm of novelty that had drawn her son on and on from a chance acquaintance to friendship and love; but to her, every moment of closer survey seemed only to lessen the possible points of contact.

She seated herself wearily, facing the one door of the room, and beside a large centre table, loaded with books, papers, and what not. Her eye, sweeping the disordered array, fell on some photographs lying near at hand. She glanced at them idly; they were evidently the work of an amateur, and appeared to be a series of a group of young people, taken in various settings and poses.

Moved by a sudden thought, she

looked at one of them more closely. Yes, he was there—and the girl, too—the others she did not know. She examined the picture of her son with intense interest, struck by the recollection that it was the first she had seen of him since he had entered college—now ten years ago. He had had one made for her, then, as a remembrance, she had said, of the boy who was leaving her, never to return. And he had not returned. How truly she had spoken, she had never so fully realized as at this moment, when the memory of the old picture placed itself beside the one she now held.

She picked up the other photographs, one at a time, passing over them slowly, her eyes seeking always the one face, and lingering there. Suddenly, she sat erect, brought to full attention by the picture she had just taken up. It was of a single head, which almost covered the card, and the head was her son's. She gazed at it, absorbed, and, gradually, the expression of keen interest faded as terror dawned in her face. She hardly dared to think the thought which was turning to ice the fingers that held the card.

How like his father he was there!

Could it be possible that she had been deceived all these years by a difference in coloring, in cut of feature, into thinking him the very antithesis of Oliver Gwynne, placing him proudly with the men of her own family? There was no color here to cheat her, no retoucher's art had erased a single mark of the camera's record. But—those lines about the mouth—were they really in his face? She had never noticed them there, and yet it was those lines which combined so hideously to distort the face into the expression she had known so well—long ago.

Hot resentment surged in her. She could have cried out in her helpless fury at this outrage of fate: That Walter Gwynne, *her son*, should have anything of his father—even this slight facial resemblance! The final phrase of her thought calmed her somewhat with the comfort it suggested. After all, the resemblance was slight—a

chance expression—an inherited play of the features—nothing more. No, thank God, nothing more.

A step in the doorway brought her to herself with a start, and she rose to greet Miriam Ware.

The girl came quickly across the room, her hand out. "I am so sorry to have kept you waiting," she said, a little breathlessly. She paused a moment, but as her proffered hand was taken in silence, she continued: "I was with my uncle—we are working upstairs to-day—he isn't very well."

"Oh, I am sorry," Mrs. Gwynne murmured absently. Her thoughts were with her eyes on the face before her. How frail the girl looked! She was of the type sparingly made, but there had been a change in some way—a slight flattening of the curve of the cheek, a waning of its color. She had suffered, then—she as well as Walter.

Embarrassed by the silent scrutiny, Miriam dropped her eyes, and they encountered the photograph in her guest's hand.

"Oh, you found that picture!" she exclaimed hurriedly, as though eager to end the pause. "Isn't it good? We thought it so like him—quite the best of all. The expression is so like him, so—so like him." She ended lamely, taken aback by the sudden change in Mrs. Gwynne's face.

The mother's startled eyes had flown to her son's picture, and back again to the girl. "You find it so like him?" she demanded.

"Oh—don't you?"

"I don't know—perhaps it is—I don't know." She laid the photograph on the table with a nervous hand, and sat down. Miriam dropped into a chair close by, and waited.

"I need not tell you why I have come—you know that."

There was no reply from the girl, only a slight straightening of her figure, as though, at an expected signal, she braced herself to alert attention. The woman's troubled spirit shrank before the quiet poise of the erect young body. Her voice faltered, as she

added: "You have made my boy very unhappy, Miriam."

The words seemed to surprise the girl. She looked with startled interest into the distressed eyes of the older woman, and noted with wonder the anxious, pleading manner. "Why, I thought you would be pleased!" she murmured, in a puzzled tone.

Mrs. Gwynne leaned forward eagerly. "Then that *was* why—I mean, did my attitude—what you thought my attitude—influence your decision in any way?"

There was a pause. Miriam's eyes wandered away for a moment, then returned. "No," she said, at last. "No."

She spoke absently, as though her thoughts were held apart by the effort she was making to adjust them to the unexpected direction the interview had taken. "Of course, I always knew you didn't like it. Oh," rousing herself, "it was nothing you said or did! You were charming to me in every way—but I felt that you were disappointed. You see, I understood why you must be. But I thought you were mistaken—mistaken about me—and I believed you would come to see it—in time—and—"

"Then why——" Mrs. Gwynne interrupted.

"Because I realize now that you were right. We are not suited to one another—he and I—all our ideas, our traditions, are different. They would clash on almost every issue. After the romance was over, we should have no interests in common—nothing to live by together, day after day. You've seen that, of course, from the first, and you must help me to make him see it, too."

Her thoughts seemed to have struck a well-trodden path, the end of which they knew. On Mrs. Gwynne's strained attention, the phrases fell smooth and polished, like the well-rounded periods of a set speech. Her own tone assumed a corresponding formality, as she asked:

"Then your decision is quite final?"

"Oh, yes."

"Why? I am not asking from curi-

osity, or perhaps even from interest. You were quite right about my feeling—I was disappointed—I had other plans. But, after all, my son's happiness was what I desired most, and that seemed to depend on you. It seems still to depend on you—that is why I am here."

Miriam nodded comprehendingly. She was at ease now that she had forced the conversation to a frank, unemotional basis. This woman who sat opposite her now, calm, self-contained, remote, was the woman she knew, the woman she had prepared herself to meet.

"I do not assume a right to question you, Miss Ware," Mrs. Gwynne continued. "You have no doubt given my son your reasons, but their significance seems to have escaped him. I came to-day because I hoped I might be able to clear away the difficulty which has arisen. I thought that perhaps he had offended you—unconsciously; that he had disappointed you in some way—about some matter on which you had laid great stress. A woman is so apt to do that—often about a thing so small that a man doesn't even take it into account. If there is anything of that sort—and you will tell me—I may be able to help you to see his action, as I am sure he must have meant it—because he loves you—he loves you, my dear!"

The speech begun so calmly, so coldly, ended with a pathetic note of pleading. The impenetrable armor of manner had dropped from her once more, and her troubled soul lay bare.

The girl shrank back in her chair, with a little cry. "Oh, I can't explain to *you*! Or to any one," she added quickly. "It wouldn't seem convincing to any one but me. You see, it is just a feeling—my feeling—about it all."

"Your feeling? You mean that you don't love Walter?"

The answer was a quick intake of breath.

"I am not blaming you, my child; you can't force love. And if that is your reason, there isn't any more to be

said. But—Walter feels that you still care for him. Tell me—is he wrong?"

The young face quivered, and Mrs. Gwynne, watching, exclaimed eagerly: "Ah, you do love him—don't you?"

"I don't know—I don't know," the girl moaned despairingly. "I don't think I know what love—is." She roused herself suddenly, and leaned forward. "What is it?"

The woman smiled sadly. "That is a very old question. Many have tried to answer it, and no one has ever really succeeded. It isn't a thing to be put into words, or even thoughts." She sighed, a little wearily. "I am afraid I am old-fashioned and don't understand the young women of to-day, who try to analyze and pull to pieces all the beautiful things in their lives, until there is nothing left of the sweetness or mystery. Love isn't to be understood by thinking. When it comes it sweeps one along, and thought ceases. You feel it—that is all."

"But it can't be all! It shouldn't be all!" the girl cried. "Oh, that is why I blame myself—I should have thought before—I should have *known*! I think I always did know—from the very first—but it was so sweet—to drift." She sank back with a sob, and covered her face with her hands.

Mrs. Gwynne started up eagerly. "Then I was right. You do love him, and he has done something that has hurt you. Tell me what it is."

"Don't—don't!" Miriam sobbed, feeling in her belt for her handkerchief. "I shall be all right in a minute. Oh, please don't ask me any more questions—it isn't anything I can explain."

Mrs. Gwynne laid her hand on the bent head. "You need not explain anything, my dear," she said gently, "only tell me what has happened, and I will try—" She stopped abruptly at the sound of a knock at the door.

Miriam sprang up at once, brushing her handkerchief over her wet eyes. With a murmured "Pardon me," she hurried to the door. There were an inquiry and answer in an undertone, and she turned back.

"The proof sheets of an article," she explained, as her hands collected the long, printed papers that lay on the desk, while her eyes sought the clock. "I didn't expect them to send so early. My uncle has made several changes—I must write and explain." She crossed over, as she spoke, to the typewriter, and added, as she seated herself before it: "You will excuse me, won't you? I shall be only a minute."

The feeling of sympathy and understanding which had come to Mrs. Gwynne when the girl so suddenly surrendered herself to her emotion, had expanded into a feeling of pity for the young creature to whom such a moment brought no protecting privacy, and she had followed her rapid movements with eyes warm with compassion. But now, when the young face was turned toward her fully, she was startled by the alteration that had taken place in it, a change of expression so great as to seem almost a change of individuality. Cold and still, it bore no trace of the recent emotion. The eyes intent on the work before them were clear and dry again, and it flashed over Mrs. Gwynne that she and her errand had been swept aside as easily and completely as the tears.

A brief clattering of the keys of the instrument, a few brisk movements, and Miriam Ware was at the door with package and note for the waiting servant. When she was once more seated opposite her guest, so far had the thoughts of both traveled that it seemed quite natural that the first words spoken should be of the interruption rather than of what had preceded it.

"I really couldn't keep those people waiting any longer," Miriam began apologetically; "they had such a hard time getting the article, in the first place. My uncle doesn't care to do work for the popular magazines, but sometimes he is so besieged he can't refuse. I am always glad to have him consent—I can understand such articles." She smiled deprecatingly. "You see, I take his dictation, and when I don't understand the subject, it is just

a string of words to me. My work in the West was so different; I was in a business office there, you know."

She had never before spoken of this part of her life to her fiancé's mother, nor, since the engagement, to him. She had perceived and outwardly conformed to the feeling which mother and son shared, that the unfortunate circumstance of her having had to earn her own living being one that could never by any possibility arise again, it was well to forget, or, at least, to ignore it. To Mrs. Gwynne's mind, it was this circumstance which marked the social gulf her son had wished to bridge; and the girl's apparently casual mention of it now seemed weighted with deliberate intent to emphasize a distance she no longer cared to cover. But why did she no longer care? Mrs. Gwynne felt herself as far as ever from the solution of that mystery, but groping for light, she was grateful for the respite the change of subject afforded her.

"Your life here, your duties, must be much more agreeable for you," she said; "you are in your own home—sheltered always."

"Sheltered?" The girl considered a moment. "Why, yes, I suppose I am sheltered; but I don't believe I have ever thought of it in just that way before. The work out there was so much more interesting—perhaps because I wasn't sheltered—perhaps just because I was exposed—to people, to life. I don't suppose you know anything about business life; of course, but it is very different from—well, social life. There—in business life—you really see people—their natures are stripped. The demands which are made at every turn bring out the weakness, as well as the strength, of a man, for every one to see. He can't bluff always—there isn't time—he must show his hand. Oh, it shocks you at times, at first, but the things you learn don't hurt you—they are a protection for the next time. But outside of business—in social intercourse—you never see people clearly. There is always the—obscuring veil—of social—amenity."

The tone was abstracted, the words disjointed, as though she groped her way among the ideas her memory had evoked.

"Perhaps that is true," Mrs. Gwynne murmured, "and yet we come in time to see through the veil."

"In time—yes; but it would take a very long time to know a man in that way."

"It does not seem to me necessary—or desirable—that a woman should know a man well, unless she marries him," Mrs. Gwynne replied.

"But she must know him *before!*" As she finished, Miriam threw a frightened glance at her guest, as though startled at what she had heard herself say.

Mrs. Gwynne caught the look. "Ah, I see!" she said at once. "And you feel that you don't know Walter?"

"No."

There was a pause before the word was spoken, momentary only, but long enough for Mrs. Gwynne to feel that the reply had not been quite spontaneous. What was in this girl's mind that she seemed to be guarding so vigilantly; what were the thoughts she was so unwilling to speak? Vaguely disquieted, Mrs. Gwynne answered:

"That is because your lives have been so different—as you yourself said—your traditions, your standards, have not been quite the same. Forgive me for speaking of these things, but they have their bearing. When you have lived his life, known his friends, the feeling of strangeness will leave you, and you will understand him."

Miriam sat listening silently, her head bent, her hands clasped tightly in her lap.

"My dear child, why do you distress yourself with these doubts and questions? Walter loves you, I know, and I believe that you love him. What else is there? I won't speak of all he has to give the woman he marries—the material advantages—but he has so much to offer in himself. He will make you a devoted, a loyal, husband; he will bring you what few men bring to

their wives—you may believe me, few men—a pure mind and a clean life." The girl had raised her head, and she bent surprised, incredulous eyes on Mrs. Gwynne, as she continued: "He is a gentleman, honorable and sincere. Is all this nothing? When you think of him, do you never think of these things? Do they not count for him, at all?"

"Mrs. Gwynne"—Miriam spoke abruptly, almost sharply—"why should you and I go on at cross-purposes, like this? I have broken my engagement to your son, and you are glad of it. Oh, yes, you are," she insisted in response to a protesting gesture, "and I don't know why you have come here now, unless it is that Walter has blamed you for the break and you are anxious to convince him that he is wrong. I have already told him so; I am sorry that he did not believe me—for your sake. I did resent your attitude—naturally—but it made no difference in the stand I took—I was to marry him, not you—and I regret very much that you should have to suffer for it now. If there is anything I can do to convince him, tell me, and I will do it gladly."

"There is only one thing that will convince him," Mrs. Gwynne answered quietly, "and that is—the *truth*."

"The truth?"

"Yes—your real reason for refusing to marry him."

"But I have explained, I——"

"You have explained nothing. You have merely evaded an explanation. Tell me——"

"Oh, please don't ask me any more questions!" Miriam pleaded nervously.

"Ah, you see! You won't answer. But you must answer this—is there any one else?"

"No, no!"

"Then he has done——"

"Please—please——"

"You don't care for him, then, for if you did, you would forgive anything—everything. In a woman's love for a man, there is always something of the mother's spirit. If she sees his faults, she condones them; if he hurts her,

she forgives—as she would her child." She paused.

Miriam shivered slightly, but she did not speak.

"I am afraid I am distressing you," Mrs. Gwynne said, "and yet I think I could help you if you would only tell me what——"

"Oh, don't—don't—you are distressing me." The girl's face and hands twitched nervously.

"I am very sorry," Mrs. Gwynne answered coldly, "and I only hoped I might help you." She rose as she spoke.

At her movement, Miriam leaned forward, with a quick gesture of arrest. "Oh, wait," she cried, "perhaps you can—perhaps you can!"

Mrs. Gwynne sank back into her chair. The girl's eyes, wide with a new thought, were riveted on her face, but for a moment neither of them spoke.

"Well?" Mrs. Gwynne prompted finally.

"I was told once—I don't remember when, or by whom," Miriam began slowly, and with hesitation; "but I was told that you were—separated from your husband—years before his death—that your married life was very short. Is that true?"

"Yes." The word came instantly, forced out by utter surprise.

"Why?"

But Mrs. Gwynne was on her feet, white with indignation.

"Oh, I have offended you!" the girl cried. "And I didn't mean to do that—I didn't, I——"

"I believe you," the woman interrupted, mastering herself. "You did not think what you were saying? When you are older, you will understand that there are sorrows in a woman's life which no one may speak of—wounds that will bear no pressure."

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, if I have hurt you," Miriam exclaimed, "but you are not fair to me. Can't you see how unfair you are? You have asked me question after question—you have pried into my thoughts and feelings

without a word of apology; but you are indignant the moment I ask you a question. You say there are sorrows one may not speak of, wounds one may not touch. What of *mine*? Your wound is old—healed years ago—mine is fresh and bleeding! But you didn't care—you put in the probe—you saw me writhe under the torture, but you didn't care."

Mrs. Gwynne stood for a moment, speechless with amazement. "You don't understand," she answered presently. "Your question concerns a woman's relations with her husband, and they—"

"They are sacred, I suppose you mean?" The young eyes met the old ones squarely. "Yes, I dare say you are right—but it doesn't matter. Other relations, other feelings, are sacred, too. Oh!" she broke out suddenly. "How unfair you are! But you don't have to answer my question. I know what your marriage was! I have seen it often as I have looked into my own future—into my life with your son. You say if a woman loves she forgives anything. Did you? You who let love sweep you along—what do you know of the agony of bracing yourself against the current? Have you been young, with every drop of blood in you crying out for a man's arms, a man's lips, and knowing that the man was a coward and a cheat? You say he is honorable, with a clean life. He isn't—he isn't! He's none of these things—but I love him—I love him!"

The wave of passion and despair reached its height in the wild cry of longing, then broke into a convulsion of hard, dry sobs, as she threw herself into the chair, and buried her face against the arm.

Mrs. Gwynne stood for a moment, looking down at the huddled figure, so frail, so stricken, and again a sense of understanding came to her as it had before, when the girl had given way to her grief. This abandon seemed natural and normal, a human weakness with which she could sympathize. The meaning of the words that had been spoken had not fully pierced her consciousness. She took a step forward—then drew back sharply, at a sudden thought. A knock at that door yonder, and this crouching, unnerved form would rise, alert and fully poised; the clinched hands would relax and fly swiftly over the keys of that machine there; those weeping eyes dry and serene under a smooth and quiet brow, she would sit there as before, calm and controlled; her grief held far off as by a barricade—guarded from herself and all the world, by an impenetrable wall of—work.

While she would go away to moan out her despair in the silence of a darkened room. No one would disturb her—her privacy would be sacred. She would be guarded as always—sheltered as always, from everything—everything except her own *ignorance*.

Yes, she would go back now to her son. Her son? His—his! His title was written there in every line of the weak, sensuous face. Why had she never seen it before—while there was still time?

Mad resentment welled up in her, as her eyes burned into those of her son in the upturned photograph on the table; but it was the eyes of his father that she saw, as she groped her way blindly past the weeping girl to the door.





MRS. SENTALL'S ADVENTURE



BY MRS. W. K. CLIFFORD



MRS. SENTALL was a very pretty woman, thirty-seven, rather plump, blue-eyed, and smiling. In her cheek there was a dimple, in her brown hair a charming kink, and soft little curls framed her forehead. Her husband was something in the city; it doesn't matter what; it produced twelve hundred a year, which was a comfortable and material fact. He was a good deal like the husband of the lady about whom the young man lied in a brilliant one-act play, in that he thought her the most remarkable and beautiful woman in London society, and that he was ready to be jealous, with or without reason, at a moment's notice. London society was represented to the gentleman in the play from a South Kensington point of view; Mr. Sentall regarded it from Surbiton, where he had bought a red brick villa, with a portico, a gable, and a weathercock; detached, of course, and known as The Acacias. There were four little Sentalls; the eldest, Maude, was fourteen, and wore a pigtail down her back, tied with a bow at the top. There was a smaller girl, called Daisy, who had a thinner pigtail, tied with a bow at the end. And there were two little boys, Cyril and Gilbert, who are of no concern to us here.

The Sentalls agreed that it would be a wise thing to endow Maude and Daisy with a better knowledge of French and German tongues than they appeared to be getting from the daily governess who came to them at Surbiton, and that a year or two at a foreign boarding school would be the way

to do it. They were told of one at Bonn, but the astute Mr. Sentall felt sure that the university students would notice, not wisely and too well, the budding beauty of his daughters. Then Wiesbaden was suggested as being a place at which there were many schools, and of Wiesbaden they had sentimental memories; they had stayed there on their honeymoon trip—at the Grand Kaiser, a quiet, drowsy little hotel, with indifferent food and moderate charges. Mr. Sentall was too busy to go himself, but it occurred to him that it would be a good idea to send his wife to inspect the various scholastic establishments—as the agent called them—to interview the mistresses, and to discuss the details.

So Mrs. Sentall went—and this is how her little adventure came about. Her "Wilfred-boy," as she called her husband, saw her off, via the Hook of Holland, from Liverpool Street station—she knew the route well. They sighed as they kissed each other on the platform, and thought of their first month of blessed matrimony.

She arrived at Wiesbaden half an hour before supper time the next day. Her husband had not written to secure a room at the Grand Kaiser; she would be sure to get one, he said, and they would charge more if it were ordered. He was right; she could have had half a dozen. The hotel was as drowsy as ever, as clean, as ugly, and as quiet. Mrs. Sentall looked round her room, stuffy by reason of its hangings and its chair backs, and felt a lack of excitement. But something tempted her to put on a fresh blouse before she went in to supper, to arrange her pretty hair becomingly, and

to pull in her waist an inch or two with a silver belt which she had put into her bag, in case she met any one she knew. When she entered the dining room, she didn't look a day more than three-and-thirty—which is a beguiling age to the other sex.

At one table sat two large and solid ladies, evidently sisters; they were very serious and silent; their appetites were, obviously, healthy; at another were a father and mother, with their three children—a "masterful German husband," thought Mrs. Sentall, as she saw him help himself before he helped his wife. A third table accommodated a honeymoon couple—or a young one, at any rate, still at the holding-the-hand-under-the-table stage. At the fourth table, there was seated a distinctly good-looking Englishman, of five-and-thirty, with a short, well-trimmed brown beard and mustache; his eyes looked pleasant, and altogether he was the most pleasing object in the room—to Mrs. Sentall. She took her place, all alone, at the end of the room, and went through a horrible meal, that included coarse beef and weak tea. Everybody looked at her rather severely except the brown man, in whose eyes there was a little unconscious curiosity. Perhaps he wondered why she was alone, whether she had a husband or was a widow, for he had caught sight of her wedding ring. But nothing happened. After supper, she went to the dismal salon, read a *New York Herald* and an old English paper, and, being ignorant of German, left the rest alone. She was much bored, and went to bed.

At breakfast the next morning, no one was down but the brown-bearded Englishman. She had her breakfast at one table, he had his at another. Then she went out and investigated for schools, looked at the shops, and returned in time for the midday dinner, which was very long, and included an ice pudding in the shape of a castle. The brown-bearded man watched her a good deal. Mrs. Sentall thought him handsome by this time, and wished she knew his name and who he was. In

the afternoon, she wandered along the arcades, and looked at more shops, then walked in the Kursaal grounds. There were to be fireworks that evening; she longed to go to them, but she hadn't courage to do it alone. While she was looking at the programme—it was stuck up at the gates—the brown-bearded man passed, and regarded her with interest. She was aware of it. She went to a shop, and had some tea; it was dreadfully dull, and she wished she knew somebody. Suddenly, the brown-bearded man entered, asked for some coffee, and ate two cherry tarts with a dab of cream on the top; Mrs. Sentall left him there, and she knew that he looked after her as she departed.

Supper—that hideous German supper—took place again as it had done the night before. She was thankful to remember that the next day—the afternoon—would see her departure. Wiesbaden was delightful with Wilfred, but it didn't do alone. She went to the reading room after supper; she had written to Wilfred and the children earlier in the day, so now she looked at an old, illustrated time-table and other equally exciting books on the table. She was horribly bored again. The brown-bearded man entered, and sat down at a writing table on her left, with his back to her, and in front of a much-used blotting pad. He opened the drawers of the table—in search of paper and envelopes, probably; she could have told him they were empty. He shut them up with a bang. She sighed from sheer lack of anything else to do, and pushed away the time-table. Suddenly, he turned round.

"Forgive me for speaking to you," he said. "I don't mean to be impertinent, or anything of the sort—"

"No," she said feebly, and waited.

"I can see that you are here alone, and that you are bored. I'm here alone, and don't know what to do with myself. I don't care to go to the Kursaal alone, and, naturally, you don't; but I think you want to see the fireworks—I saw you reading the programme today. Why shouldn't I take you?"

"Oh, no!" She tried to look a little shocked.

"But why not?" he persisted. "I shall not say a word or do anything that you could resent—or that your husband would mind." He thought it better to take it for granted that there was a husband. "We don't know anything about each other; we needn't know anything; but it seems ridiculous that two sensible, well-conducted people as we are, not children"—he was too polite to say, of course, that he took her to be about five-and-thirty—"shouldn't spend an hour or two together as pleasant acquaintance, just because, instead of meeting at a friend's house, where we didn't want to talk together, perhaps, we meet at a dull hotel, where we do, and can be of some use to each other."

"I think what you say is very sensible—" began Mrs. Sentall.

"Then let us be sensible and go. It's five minutes' walk from here, and unless we hurry we shall be late."

Mrs. Sentall was a woman of spirit. "I'll go," she said. She hurried upstairs, put on her hat, and arranged a lace scarf becomingly about her neck; her coat, she knew, was well cut, and made her look slim. As she came down the stairs, which were rather wide, and led into a square hall, she met the middle-aged sisters of the vigorous appetites. The brown-bearded man was waiting for her—obviously; they regarded her with astonishment; so did the waiter—who came forward to ask if she would like a cab—when he saw her go up to him, and they walked away together.

It was a little awkward at first, but presently words came, and they talked about music of the lighter kind, places on the Rhine, and the different boats. Mrs. Sentall was not a cultured woman; the brown-bearded man was not highly educated, but he was intelligent and good-natured. They entered the Kursaal, each paying for their own entrance. He had some lager beer when they sat down at a little table; she had some coffee, and paid for it. Altogether it was a quite sen-

sible, well-regulated little expedition. They saw the fireworks admirably, laughed and chatted, and grew excited. They passed the father and mother and children, who looked a little surprised at seeing Mrs. Sentall with the man who had hitherto been without acquaintance in the hotel. The German father looked back at them two or three times; the German mother spoke excitedly and quickly. It didn't matter what they said, Mrs. Sentall went back well pleased with her evening.

They had breakfast at the same table the next morning, and afterward went together for a long drive through the most beautiful woods. He insisted on paying for the carriage; he gave her strawberries and cream and delicious little cakes. It was after this refreshment that, her heart being full and her mind burdened with her own audacity, she turned to her companion.

"Mr.——" She stopped.

"Never mind," he said, "we agreed not to mention names."

"I'm certain they looked shocked at the hotel——"

He laughed.

"That they think me wicked, or something."

"But you're not; we've only been extremely sensible, and we've done nothing wrong."

"I have a husband——" she began.

"I have a wife, and two children," he said. "They're at Ramsgate just at present. I thought I should like a change alone."

"Oh!" Mrs. Sentall was relieved; but it took from the romance of the adventure. "But my husband is dreadfully jealous; he would never believe—and he would never forgive me if he——"

"I quite understand. It's just the same with my wife. I wouldn't let the little woman know for the world." He touched her hand in a friendly fashion, and she didn't draw it away; he liked her for it. "It's all right; don't be afraid," he added. "I think you are charming, and I wouldn't say a word that was disrespectful for the world—I haven't, have I? And I won't. Now,

shall we give ourselves a certificate of virtue by going to buy something for my wife. I never know what a woman likes—you do, of course. Help me to choose it?"

So they went and did some shopping. She thoroughly enjoyed it, for she had all the pleasure of buying pretty things and not paying for them. Then he helped her to get a notebook for Wilfred, and some other things, which he shrewdly guessed were for the children. She didn't tell him that she had four, because, having a spice of coquetry in her heart still, she thought it would look so very matter-of-fact. They went back to the hotel, and lunched at the same table. Every one was scandalized.

"You start home by the three o'clock train, don't you?" he asked, and when she had assented, he told her that he was going on to Heidelberg by the three-fifteen. So they went to the station in the same cab, and he saw her off.

The hotel was dumfounded, and felt certain that they had eloped.

Mrs. Sentall never told her husband, but she smiles to this day when she remembers Wiesbaden. The children did not go to school there, after all, but to one at Hanover, recommended by some cousins; it is just as well, for perhaps the Grand Kaiser waiter would have spread a scandal concerning their mother, if she had gone to see them, and he had recognized her.

Did they ever meet again, Mrs. Sentall and the brown-bearded man?

Yes, last summer. This is how it was:

They went to Hastings for a week. She had a violent toothache, and her husband insisted that, since the tooth had bothered her for months past, she should have it out, and be done with it. So they went to Mr. Algernon Turner, who has a brass plate with many letters after his name on the door at the end of the Parade. They heard that he was the best dentist in

the place. Of course, they waited in the usual dismal room till the moment came when they were ushered in to the dentist, and, lo, there was the brown-bearded man awaiting her. She nearly fainted and said: "How d'ye do?" He bowed in the most decorous manner, and turned to her husband. She mounted to the operating chair, with an entreaty in her manner. He looked into her mouth, while she trembled so violently that her husband put his hand on her shoulder, and said: "Come, my dear, Mr. Turner isn't an ogre, and he won't hurt you." She refused to have gas; she was a plucky woman, and not afraid of a little pain. Mr. Turner insisted that her Wilfred-boy should go to the other end of the room, and turn away his head during the operation. The tooth came out with one pull. She gave a little scream, of course. Mr. Sentall rushed a step forward, but Mr. Algernon Turner waved him away, and in that moment she raised her head, and whispered:

"Pray, don't tell him; it would kill me!"

Mr. Sentall heard her, and turned quickly. "What is there to tell me, my dear, and what is going to kill you?"

The brown-bearded man looked at her with a smile that was almost affectionate, and then, in a business-like manner, at the extracted tooth on his forceps. "Why, there was no occasion to pull it out," he said. "Really, it's quite a good tooth. Your wife thinks you will be so vexed at her losing it."

He shook hands with her as they went away. She let her hand linger in his for a moment; he looked at her gratefully; he felt for the last time.

"A good chap, that dentist," said Mr. Sentall. "He evidently admired your pluck; and I don't wonder."

Mrs. Sentall was too much agitated to answer. Wilfred-boy ordered a pint of champagne at luncheon; he thought she needed it.

FOR BOOK LOVERS **Archibald Lowery Sessions**

Ainslee's for July. Winston Churchill makes a new departure in "A Modern Chronicle." "Mr. Carteret and Others," by David Gray, is highly entertaining. All gloom and grief is "Sally Bishop," by E. Temple Thurston. Molly Elliot Seawell has written one of her best stories in "The Marriage of Theodora," "The Achievements of Luther Ttani," by Edwin Balmer and William MacHarg, is a collection of good detective stories. Nothing noteworthy about Will Irwin's "The House of Mystery." "The Girl from His Town," by Marie Van Vorst, is a very good story. Ellery H. Clark is not altogether convincing in "The Carleton Case." Henry C. Rowland's "In the Service of the Princess" is interesting throughout



We are, on the whole, fairly well satisfied with the programme which we have given you during the half year which closes with this number. In that time you have had the unusual advantage of reading three serial stories, besides the usual quota of complete novels and short stories, most of which has been the best work of some of the leading authors of the time.

In this number you will find the concluding chapters of Harold MacGrath's fine novel, "A Splendid Hazard," as well as of Emily Post's three-part serial, "The Eagle's Feather." As to the latter, everybody is agreed that it is the best, by far the best, work that Mrs. Post has ever done.

If, by any chance—a slight one, we know—you have overlooked Joseph C. Lincoln's short story, "The Pocket-book," on page forty-three, you should turn to it at once before you let it escape you a second time; but first listen to what we have to say to you about the July number.

Probably most of you have heard or read about Anthony Partridge. In spite of the fact that his name is a

comparatively new one, he has published two books, the second of which has had a conspicuous place in the list of the six best sellers. It is an unusual distinction for a comparatively new author, and you are just as well aware of the significance of the fact as any one else. In the July number, AINSLEE's will begin Mr. Partridge's latest novel, under the title of "The Golden Web." It is a story that will keep you in a state of breathless interest to the very last word, for it is full of situations that keep your sympathy for the characters constantly excited, and fill you with an intense desire that they, or some of them, will succeed in extricating themselves. The people are very real and very appealing.

The complete novel is called "The Cuyler Case," and, as you may infer from the title, it is a mystery story. It is swiftly moving, and there are some very graphically described scenes, which will impress you.

There will be short stories by G. B. Lancaster, who has made a reputation as a writer of fiction of the "strong" type; Herman Whitaker, whom you know from his fine Western tales; Kathryn Jarboe, Owen Oliver, Johnson Morton, Charles N. Buck, Jane W. Guthrie, and others.

In his latest book, Winston Churchill has, as his publishers, the Macmillan Company, announce, made "a new departure in that the leading character of 'A Modern Chronicle' is a woman, instead of, as heretofore in his novels, a man." It would be rather more definite to say that Mr. Churchill has at last yielded to the inevitable, and has written a society novel; for that, essentially, is what "A Modern Chronicle" is.

Naturally, therefore, he must face the consequences of comparison with the work of others who have previously occupied the same field. He has probably anticipated something of the kind, however, and most likely has prepared himself to receive it with complacency.

We think that, in casting his story, Mr. Churchill has selected the wrong mould. An attempt to combine Robert W. Chambers and William De Morgan results in something like incongruity. A compound of "The Younger Set" and "Somehow Good" is almost indelicate.

Having determined to adopt Mr. Chambers in substance, Mr. Churchill should have frankly adopted his method, instead of undertaking to adjust Mr. De Morgan's discursive style to the modern American novel of smart society.

Candor compels the reluctant admission that "A Modern Chronicle" is tiresome. A half dozen chapters are consumed in conveying to the reader what might have been imparted in as many pages.

Honora Leffingwell's babyhood and childhood is a part of her life that the reader might have been allowed to take for granted; or, at least, Mr. Churchill might, with advantage, have given us a more condensed account of that period of her life. A few words, comparatively, would have let us know that she was an orphan, and had been brought up by an uncle and aunt, who lived in St. Louis; and that Howard Spence, to whom she was married, was a young Wall Street broker. We should have been spared many uninteresting details, and the way would have been

made clear for her subsequent marriage with Hugh Chiltern and his death and her final acceptance of Peter Erwin, the faithful lover of her school days.



Mr. David Gray is probably known and remembered best as the author of the attractive hunting stories, which he called "Gallops."

The Century Company has just published a new book of his, under the title "Mr. Carteret and Others."

The volume contains six stories, four of them, covering one hundred and fifty-four pages, being devoted to certain adventures of Mr. Carteret Carteret.

It opens with an English house party, Carty, as he is called, being one of the guests. By a fortunate chance, there happens, at the time, to be a Wild West Show performing in London, and, in the course of a discussion with his host, an enthusiastic follower of the hounds, with the usual prejudices of an English fox hunter, Carty offers to bring to the next meet a few cowboys and Indians, to convince the Englishman that there are, for him, some still undiscovered principles of cross-country riding. Carty's Western friends present themselves, and the results are entertaining.

The other stories have a good deal more feminine interest than the first, as might be expected from stories of English house parties. Mr. Carteret's principal functions seem to be those of straightening out the tangles into which his fellow guests have involved themselves. He is everybody's friend, one of those very wise young men, whose mission in life seems to be that of a sort of father confessor, to whom all his friends and acquaintances instinctively bring all their troubles, in the happy certainty that they will be satisfactorily solved.

He is an altogether engaging young man, and no one will be inclined to blame the charming Miss Rivers for swallowing her pride, and allowing Carty to make the explanations which restore him and Penwiper to favor.

E. Temple Thurston gives to his new book, "Sally Bishop," published by Mitchell Kennerly, the subtitle, "A Romance," and, in a prefatory letter to Gerald du Maurier, attempts to anticipate any criticism of such a classification of his story. He says he calls Sally's story a romance, because "she made her dream out of Reality itself." He may be wrong about this, but we hope he is correct when he says it is "perhaps the saddest story" he shall ever write.

•It is, sad enough, in all conscience; sad enough to satisfy the profoundest craving for gloom and grief and tears. There is nothing to relieve the sombre pall that hangs over the chronicle of Sally's brief career.

Mr. Thurston has drawn her, with great skill, as one of those people, of whom we all know, who seem to be involved, from the day of birth, in a tangle of circumstances and events, from which, because of mental and emotional peculiarities—which can hardly be called defects—they seem destined never to escape.

Sally's misfortunes came to her chiefly on account of her good qualities; qualities which ordinarily make people loved and admired. She had a weak, incompetent father, and the inexorable moralists of real life would probably condemn her as the heir of her father's impotency; but she does not actually impress one in that way.

She was capable of loving unselfishly, as she showed by her devotion and loyalty to Traill, to whom she gave everything that a woman has to give, unquestioningly.

Mr. Thurston has, as we have said, handled his story skillfully. But there is a false note through it all, in so far as he has sought to establish the thesis that what he has dealt with is essentially a woman's problem.

An English society novel, written by an American woman, may seem to some people a rather uncertain kind of an experiment, and a bit of an anomaly as well.

Before any one commits himself irrevocably to such a conclusion, however, he should take the trouble to read Molly Elliot Seawell's novel, "The Marriage of Theodora," published by Dodd, Mead & Company. We hasten to add that this suggestion is made, not alone to those who wish to satisfy their curiosity, or to quiet their doubts, but to those also who enjoy novels of high life, and who seek entertainment.

We think it is one of Miss Seawell's best stories, and to those who are familiar with her work that statement ought to be sufficient—at any rate to induce them to read it.

Naturally there are some American characters in the story. Madame Fontanari is an American girl, known in London as the daughter of a rich American, Mr. Seymour, and the widow of an Italian whose death had freed her from bonds that had become intolerable. The conflict, the development of which makes the story, grows out of the attachment between her and the son of the Earl of Castlemaine. Seymour's status in America comes in question, and there is an outcome for which the reader will find himself unprepared.



"Scientific psychology," as its devotees love to call the laboratory system of experimentation with the phenomena of the mind, promises to supply as fertile a field for fiction as air ships, and conservation, and the criminal rich, and the comet, and all the other sensations of the day.

Two enterprising authors, evidently following the lead opened by Professor Münsterberg in the case of Harry Orchard, have written a series of stories which Small, Maynard & Co. have published in a volume called "The Achievements of Luther Trant."

Edwin Balmer and William MacHarg gravely assure the reader in their "foreword" that the "book is not a work of the imagination." They say that the tests used by Luther Trant—who suddenly blossoms from a young assistant in a psychological laboratory

into a famous detective—are real tests, “precisely such as are being used daily in the psychological laboratories of our great universities.”

Luther Trant certainly does achieve great things in the detection of crime. He scorns such petty considerations as thumb-prints, and Bertilon measurements, and photographs, and he certainly does make effective use of the galvanometer and the plethysmograph. He finds them valuable aids in the practice of the third degree, no doubt, but after all, in spite of his contempt for old methods, there is something in the way he goes to work in the solution of a mystery that reminds us very emphatically of our astute friend, Sherlock Holmes. The galvanometer and the plethysmograph play their respective parts very impressively, but they do not appear until after the time-honored method of Mr. Holmes has sifted facts and circumstances and stripped the criminal of his disguise.

Then the laboratory paraphernalia is set to work on the guilty one, and his blood pressure and breathing and nervous reactions are observed, and “science” does the rest.

The stories are good ones and would be even without scientific psychology.



Will Irwin's new book, “The House of Mystery,” published by the Century Company, has a title that is to some extent misleading. It is not, as might be supposed, a detective story. It is a tale of impositions practiced upon a rich man who, in his later years, develops a longing for communication with the woman he had loved and lost in his early manhood.

Norcross, the trust magnate, is a now familiar type in fiction, the cold, self-contained, unscrupulous ruler of men and money. But in a moment of weakness he exposes his superstitious longing to one of his parasites, who immediately concocts a scheme with a woman medium to use the old man's folly for their mutual advantage. The house of this woman, in which the fake seances are held, is the house of mys-

tery, and to perform her miracles she exploits her niece, Annette Markham, who is a hypnotic subject.

The girl is rescued from the torture she undergoes by a young physician, Doctor Blake, who has met her by chance and fallen in love with her.

It is not a particularly noteworthy story in any respect, hardly worthy, we should say, of Mr. Irwin, who has shown himself capable of doing much better work. There is nothing very striking about the tale; it has no specially conspicuous flaws, and no excellencies worth mentioning. The theme is hackneyed, the characters are the same old ones, and it is written in the usual perfunctory style that is typical of such stories. It has, of course, a certain amount of interest which may attract readers who like this sort of thing.



Miss Marie Van Vorst has brought out, through the Bobbs-Merrill Company, a volume containing the story which was recently published in AINSLEE's as a complete novel under the title, “Coral Strands.”

Either she or her publishers have, however, given the story a new name. It is now called “The Girl from His Town.” Its appearance in AINSLEE's was not so long ago but that the magazine's readers will remember that, though it dealt with the theme of international marriage, the order of things was reversed, that is, feminine nobility sought the masculine American—and the American dollars. Dan Blair, by the way, from an American point of view at least, was fully good enough for the titled lady who strove to trap him. So much so, indeed, that it was rather a relief that “the girl from his town” got him, after all.

Since its serial publication, Miss Van Vorst has substantially amplified the story; but we could hardly be expected to concede that it is materially improved.

It was a good story in its magazine form, and it is a good story between cloth covers.

It is not the easiest thing in the world to classify Ellery H. Clark's story, "The Carleton Case," published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company.

The book might be called a mystery story, it might be called a story of the Street—meaning Wall Street—it might be a story of adventure.

We can, however, gather that Jack Carleton is the hero, Marjory Graham the heroine, and Henry Carleton, Jack's uncle, and a kind of John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, and Andrew Carnegie combined, is the villain.

With such an uncle, Jack couldn't be a hero unless he lost all he possessed in Wall Street. This he promptly proceeds to do, and gets no comfort, moral or financial, from his uncle. Whereupon he decides to go West and begin again, first getting Marjory's assurance that she will "wait for him."

We are given only the vaguest idea as to what he actually achieves in that land of opportunity. We only know that at the end of three years he comes back with the usual news that he has "made good." Marjory, strange to say, has really waited for him, and is prepared to make him happy.

So to make a novel of it some other complication is necessary, and Henry Carleton obligingly supplies it. He is really a very bad man, not only as an exponent of predatory wealth, but as a middle-aged Lothario. He has been paying secret court to his chauffeur's wife, and just after Jack's return escapes threatened detection by killing the husband under circumstances which seem, for a time, to point to his nephew as the guilty party. Jack is aware of the actual facts, but "for the honor of the Carletons" keeps silence.

The outcome of it all reestablishes the proverb that virtue is its own reward, and everybody is happy but Henry.



Henry C. Rowland's new book, "In the Service of the Princess," published by Dodd, Mead & Co., is another story that made its first appearance in this magazine. But it was so long ago that probably few readers will recall it.

Superficial critics, in their haste, may be tempted to classify it as a "Prisoner of Zenda" story, but that would be unjust, at any rate, so far as it carries the implication that it is, in any true sense, an imitation of Mr. Hope's famous tales.

To speak of it in this way, however, will give, in a very general way, something of an idea of what the story is like. Mr. Rowland has shown originality, which in this case means individuality in the manner in which he has drawn his characters. They all carry the conviction of realism, they are fresh and vigorous, they have the gift of initiation, and have their own way of doing things quite independent of what others have done before them under similar circumstances either in or out of books. In other words, they are never hampered by custom or tradition, literary or otherwise.

Any one who happens to have a craving for a story of action, written with some regard for cultivated tastes, and interesting throughout, could not do better than to get a copy of this book.



Important New Books.

"Lady Merton, Colonist," Mrs. Humphry Ward, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Bianca's Daughter," Justus Miles Forman, Harper & Bros.

"The Island Providence," Frederick Niven, John Lane Co.

"Tony's Wife," George Gibbs, D. Appleton Co.

"Little Aliens," Myra Kelly, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Country Neighbors," Alice Brown, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"The Education of Mr. Polly," H. G. Wells, Duffield & Co.

"Just Between Ourselves," Anne Warner, Little, Brown & Co.

"Routledge Rides Alone," Will Levington Comfort, J. B. Lippincott Co.

"The Flowers," Margarita Spalding Gerry, Harper & Bros.

"The Street of Adventure," Philip Gibbs, E. P. Dutton & Co.

"The Royal Americans," Mary Hallock Foote, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"Gloria," G. Frederick Turner, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"Philippa at Halcyon," Katherine Holland Brown, Charles Scribner's Sons.



The Winning Crew

Must have strong hearts and steady nerves, as well as strong muscles.

The "shortness of breath" caused by coffee is a sign of weak heart. Athletes know it and they quit coffee and many use

POSTUM

It is made of wheat, skilfully roasted, including the bran-coat which Nature has stored with Phosphate of Potash for supplying the gray substance in brain and nerves.

"There's a Reason" for Postum

Postum Cereal Company, Limited, Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A.



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SUGAR WAFERS

Serve NABISCO
with berries. The delicate
fruit flavor and the sweet,
creamy centers of the wafers
form a combination simply irresistible.

In ten cent tins
Also in twenty-five cent tins

NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY



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The
Only
Black
That
Stays
Black

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STOVINK

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A STOVE BLACKING

Never Burns Off

STOVINK, the wonderful blacking for stoves, is better than anything you've ever tried. It has no equal. Makes the old stove look like new. Quickly applied; clean and easy to use. *No polishing required.* It is not a paste, but a liquid blacking positively guaranteed not to burn or rub off. It never turns red or gray. Absolutely NON-EXPLOSIVE.

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321 Huron St., Toledo, Ohio

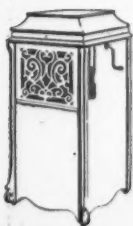
Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



CARMEN MELIS
A new and brilliant Grand
Opera prima donna

It isn't a question of whether you prefer Carmen Melis, grand opera prima donna, or Stella Mayhew, musical comedy "scream"—the instrument is the thing and the instrument that is best able to bring both of these great artists into your home is the

EDISON PHONOGRAPH

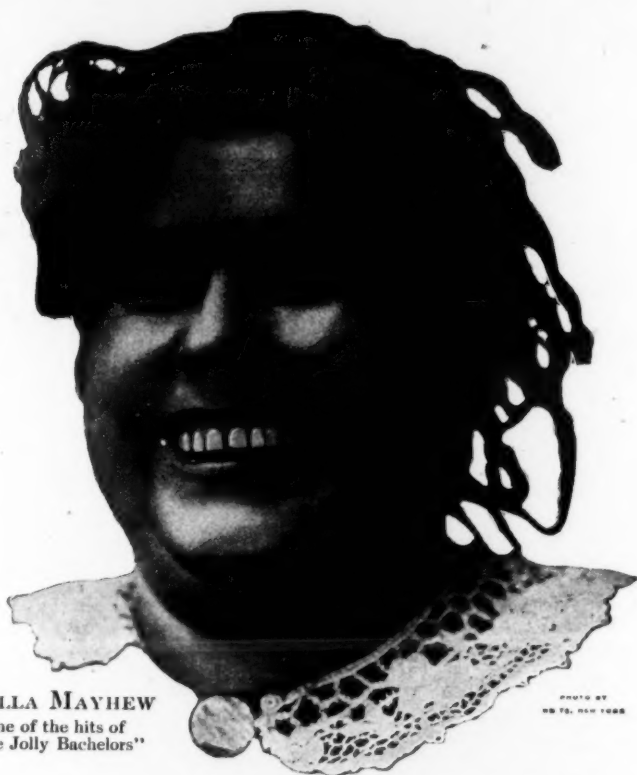


Edison Phonographs range in price from the Amberola at \$200, down to the Gem at \$12.50. The Amberola has the sweetness, clearness and faithful reproducing powers that characterize all Edison instruments and, in addition, a case that is a masterpiece of the cabinet maker's art. It comes in either mahogany or oak. Whoever buys a Gem, Fireside, Home, Standard or Triumph gets everything that the genius of Mr. Edison has been able to devise. All have sapphire reproducing points that do not scratch or require changing; all have silent long-running spring motors. Each is a perfect instrument, playing both Edison Standard and Amberol Records. Any Edison dealer has the line. Go and hear them or write us for complete catalog.

National Phonograph Company, 38 Lakeside Avenue, Orange, N. J.



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



STELLA MAYHEW

One of the hits of
"The Jolly Bachelors"

PHOTO BY
ED. TO. NEW YORK

On the one hand the arias of a Melis; on the other the clever nonsense of a Mayhew—such is the range of entertainment and such the kind of talent that is giving Edison Phonograph owners the best there is in songs, music and fun through

EDISON STANDARD & AMBEROL RECORDS



Edison Records are of two kinds—Standard and Amberol. Amberol Records play twice as long as Standard Records. They give you another verse or two of the songs you like, a waltz or a two-step that is long enough, a monologue that gets somewhere and Grand Opera that is not cut or hurried. Edison Records afford a clearness and sweetness of tone not possible in Records made in any other way. They always do justice to the singer, band or orchestra—that is why the great singers and musicians prefer to make Records for the Edison Phonograph. Edison Records can be bought of any Edison dealer—Standard Records at 35 cents each; Amberol Records 50 cents each; Grand Opera Records 75 cents to \$2.00.

National Phonograph Company, 38 Lakeside Avenue, Orange, N. J.



Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."

Dinner is Always Ready

Dinner, luncheon or supper—meals for unexpected guests. All of them are ready to be served in a minute when you have a few cans of Van Camp's on the shelf.

Now, on the verge of summer, let us again remind you what our help can mean.

In our famous kitchens are many good cooks. They are sorting and soaking—boiling and baking—beans for a million homes.

They skim the steaming kettles, face the fierce ovens, watch the whole process for hours.

As a result, when you want to serve beans, you can take them from the pantry shelf.



And those beans are the best that were ever baked. Home-baked beans cannot compare with them, because every home lacks the facilities.

Van Camp's are *baked by live steam*. They come out nut-like and whole—not mushy and broken. And all are baked alike. The tomato sauce—like the pork—is baked with the beans, to permeate them with its zest.

These beans are sealed up and then sterilized. Thus their savor and freshness remain unchanged until you open the can.

But the great fact is that Van Camp's digest easily, and other beans don't, as you know. Home-baked beans ferment and form gas. Many a stomach can't digest them at all.

We apply a terrific heat by using super-heated steam. Thus we make them more digestible than if you baked them all night in a home oven.

Van Camp's are an every-day food—a food that all can eat, and that all people like. They contain—with the pork—every food element required by the human body. They are richer than beef in nutriment, and they cost but a third as much.

The best possible way to cut down on your meat bills is to serve beans that your people like.



Letting our chef bake the beans.

VanCamp's
BAKED
WITH TOMATO
SAUCE
PORK AND BEANS

The National Dish

But don't judge Van Camp's by other ready-baked beans. Compare them with others and note the difference yourself.

We pay for our white beans—picked out by hand—four times what some beans cost. We spend for tomato sauce—made of whole, vine-ripened tomatoes—five times what common sauce costs.

It is worth insisting on Van Camp's to get such beans as these.

Three sizes: 10, 15 and 20 cents per can.

Van Camp Packing Company Established 1861 **Indianapolis, Indiana**

Tell the substitutor: "No, thank you, I want what I asked for. Good-bye."



Better Tailoring at No Man's Command

You might pay \$100 a suit and not get better style, better fit or better workmanship than is yours in Adler-Rochester Clothes.

The reason is simple:

We employ master-designers—men who head their profession.

Our style ideas are gathered from their *source*—in world-famous fashion centers.

Our workmen are *custom tailors*—each one an *expert* in that detail for which he is employed.

Fit, with us, is an art—developed in our 40 years' study of every type of man.

And our clothes are made in America's finest tailoring institution—a shop with 1011 windows, with vacuum cleaners and forced ventilation—where sunshine, health and happiness prevail.

Under such conditions, and at a making cost *four times* what some makers spend, we attain our ideals in clothes. And, to save you the higher cost, we limit our profit to 6 per cent.

No man living could command greater excellencies than those which characterize

ADLER-ROCHESTER-CLOTHES

Nor should *any* man accept less than Adler-Rochester quality when paying Adler-Rochester prices.

These range from \$18 upwards.

So if you want the most for your money—the very utmost in clothes—you will not delay visiting our local dealer.

You'll probably find him among your leading merchants. Your visit will be welcomed.

Send For This Style Book

In actual colors, our style book's illustrations show what well-dressed men will wear this season. It shows, too, fashion's most favored shades—Adler-Rochester Grays and Blues. Also it brings you the address of your Adler-Rochester dealer. It will pay you to inspect thoroughly, his stock. Learn, at first hand, what such clothes mean to you.

Send a postal today, asking for Style Book F.

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Prince of Overlands

The Marion-Overland is the finest model of the most successful line of automobiles in America.

Overland cars are now in wider demand than any other cars in existence. The average sale to users is over \$200,000 per day.

They are so simple, so economical, so trouble-proof that, in 28 months, Overland cars have reached the pinnacle place in motordom.

The finest production of the Overland engineers means the leading car of the leading line. One can hardly expect to excel it.

Imagine This Car

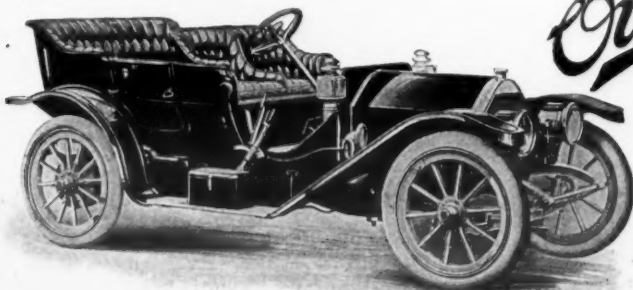
This year we are selling for \$1,000 a large and powerful car, with 25-horsepower and a 102-inch wheel base. For \$1,250 we are selling a 40-horsepower Overland, in roadster style, with a 112-inch wheel base.

Our enormous production and automatic machinery enable us to give more than anyone else for the money.

Imagine then what the Marion-Overland gives for \$1,850. The price includes head-lights, magneto, and Prest-O-Lite tank, in addition to the usual equipment.

The Car We Feared

We bought this car about a year ago because it was the only car we feared. Its makers had invented some immensely desirable features which no other car possessed. We needed those features, and we needed the men who built them.



Since then we have brought to bear on the car all the advantages of our great organization. The resulting car, in many important respects, is superior to any other car on the market.

There are a dozen models in the Overland line. You will find one of them just your sort of car—the most desirable car that its price can buy—a car that deserves its immense popularity.

But if you want to see the utmost that we can produce, let our dealer show the Marion-Overland.

If you will cut out this coupon, and check the information wanted, we will send you all the facts. We will also refer you to the nearest of our 800 dealers. You should know the cars which outsell all the rest.

The Willys-Overland Company

Toledo, Ohio

Please send me information about

Passenger Cars ☐ Delivery Cars ☐

Marion-Overlands ☐

The Overland

Cut shows one style of the Marion-Overland—price, \$1,850. Other Overland models \$1,000 to \$1,500—gas lamps and magneto included.

Licensed Under Selden Patent



When the Boss "Wants to Know"

WHEN the boss consults you on some important matter you don't have to "guess," "suppose," "think," or "believe," but you can tell him instantly what he wants to know if you have the training such as the International Correspondence Schools can impart to you *in your spare time*.

And, after all, it is the ability to furnish the right information at the right time that raises your salary and wins you promotion.

IF your present position is one that does not call for *expert knowledge* or does not hold out any chance of advancement, the I. C. S. will train you for one that *does*—and in the line of work you like best. You will not have to quit work or buy any books. ten thousand miles away, and will train you *right in your own home* for a better position, *more money*—SUCCESS. Mark the attached coupon and learn how the I. C. S. can do it.

THAT an I. C. S. training is real, *helpful*, SALARY-RAISING, is *proven* beyond doubt by the monthly average of 300 letters VOLUNTARILY written by students reporting MORE MONEY as the *direct result* of I. C. S. help. The number heard from during March was 302.

Can You Read and Write ?

IF you can but read and write the I. C. S. has a way to *help you*. Mark the coupon and learn how. Marking the coupon entails no expense or obligation. Its purpose is that you may be put in possession of information and advice that will *clear the way* to an I. C. S. training, no matter how limited your spare time or means may be.

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Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I have marked X.

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Concrete Engineer

Mechanical Draftsman
Telephone Engineer
Elec. Lighting Supt.
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LET US GET AT THIS TWO-CYCLE IDEA

Every engineer in the world—bar none—knows and WILL ADMIT that the two-cycle principle, as a principle, is perfect—faultless—ideal.

And every engineer knows that the four-cycle principle is REEKING with faults.

But to admit THIS fact would be to kill the prestige of nearly every famous car on the market. These cars gained their prestige on the old four-cycle idea. And they CANNOT AFFORD to abandon it.

Self-interest is strong. Four-cycle engineers are only human. They are naturally prejudiced in favor of their own work.

They admit the value of the two-cycle THEORY. But they will not admit that the theory is PRACTICAL.

But FACTS are stubborn. TRUTH will not down. EXPERIENCE upsets mere opinion.

THE TWO-CYCLE ENGINE IS PRACTICAL. The Atlas engine PROVES it.

For FOUR YEARS Atlas Two-Cycle Engines have been ACTUALLY delivering a degree of COMPLETE satisfaction unknown to ANY four-cycle engine on earth.

So learn FOR YOURSELF what Atlas cars mean to you.

ATLAS MOTOR CARS NOTE THE VAST DIFFERENCES

The four-cycle engine gives a power impulse to only HALF of its piston strokes. The Atlas engine gives a power impulse to ALL of its piston strokes.

Every four-cycle engine must have from 25 to 50 moving parts to each cylinder. The Atlas has only TWO.

In the four-cylinder engine many of these parts are frail, delicate—unfitted to stand the immense wear and strain of heat and speed. In the Atlas cylinder the two moving parts are merely the piston and connecting rod.

The four-cycle engine is more often in trouble from its valves than from anything else. The Atlas engine has NO valves at all.

NOW REALIZE WHAT THIS MEANS

Think how IMMEASURABLY superior these vast differences make the Atlas to ANY four-cycle engine.

By securing twice as many impulses per crankshaft revolution the Atlas actually develops from 60 to 75 per cent. MORE POWER than any four-cycle engine of equal cylinder size and number.

This means that an Atlas of TWO cylinders gives almost as much power as a four-cycle engine of FOUR cylinders—almost as much power with HALF the weight.

The four-cycle engine USES one piston stroke and LOSES the NEXT.

One stroke PUSHES. The next stroke PULLS. On the suction, or pulling stroke, the engine ABSORBS instead of GIVING power.

It's a little bit like a SEE-SAW—and, of course, that means LESS power and MORE VIBRATION.

Now, note how the Atlas DOES AWAY with these glaring faults.

The Atlas uses EVERY stroke as a POWER stroke—TWICE as many PUSHING strokes as the four-cycle, and NO PULLING strokes. No "back-and-forth"—no "give-and-take"—no loss of power—no vibration.

And the Atlas engine is SIMPLE. Only an accident can put its few parts out of action.

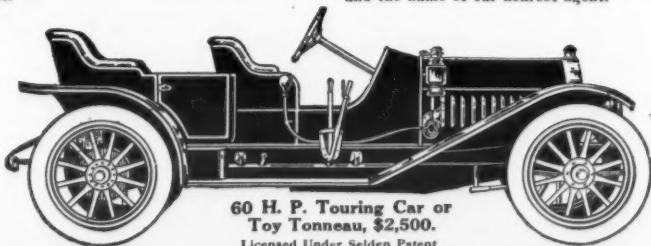
The simplicity, added to the lack of vibration and lessened weight, means freedom from trouble and repairs.

So no car can cost less for upkeep.

All of these good things are easy to PROVE.

Don't make the mistake of selecting a car until you know the Atlas.

In your own interest, let us send our Catalogue and the name of our nearest agent.



60 H. P. Touring Car or
Toy Tonneau, \$2,500.

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ATLAS MOTOR COMPANY, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

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New
Chewing Gum
With New Flavors



Colgan's latest creation — "Mint Chips" and "Violet Chips"—realizes the highest development of chewing gum. The most delicious produced.

Flavors are irresistibly good—and unlike any other mint or violet. And the gum is round; and comes to you clean and pure, cleverly tucked away

IN ROUND
METAL BOXES

"Mint Chips" have the flavor of old-fashioned mint stick candy, never before successfully introduced into chewing gum. Aid digestion, tone the stomach.


"Violet Chips" have a flavor like the aroma of Sweet Violets. Superb in bouquet—supreme for the breath.


Insist upon "Colgan's Chips" in the round metal box. Avoid imitations.

Sold Everywhere. 5 cents the box.

COLGAN GUM CO., Inc.,
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Necco SWEETS





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So tell the children to ask for NECCO SWEETS. Sold by best dealers everywhere.

NEW ENGLAND CONFECTIONERY CO., BOSTON, MASS.


KLEINERT'S

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and stateroom
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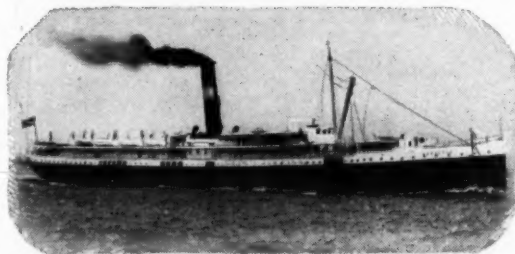
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ESTAB. 1889



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SEE THEM BEFORE PAYING!

These Gems are chemical white sapphires.
Can't be told from diamonds except by an
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So hard they can't be filed and will cut glass. Brill-
lancy guaranteed 25 years. All mounted in 14k solid
gold diamond mountings. Will send you any style ring, pin
or stud on approval—all charges prepaid—no money in advance.

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Chip, of the Flying U

THIS tale is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the living, breathing West, that the reader is likely to imagine that he himself is cantering over the grassy plains and imbibing the pure air of the prairie in company with Chip, Weary, Happy Jack and the other cowboys of the Flying U Ranch. The story is a comedy, but there are dramatic touches in it that will hold the reader breathless. Pathos and humor are adroitly commingled and the author seems to be as adept at portraying one as the other. The "Little Doctor" makes a very lovable heroine, and one doesn't blame Chip in the least for falling in love with her. The book reviewer's task would be a pleasant one if all his work had to do with such wholesome and delightful stories as "Chip, of the Flying U." If this book doesn't immediately take rank as one of the best sellers we shall lose faith in the discrimination of the American reading public. Beautifully illustrated in colors by Mr. Charles M. Russell, the greatest painter of cowboy life in America.

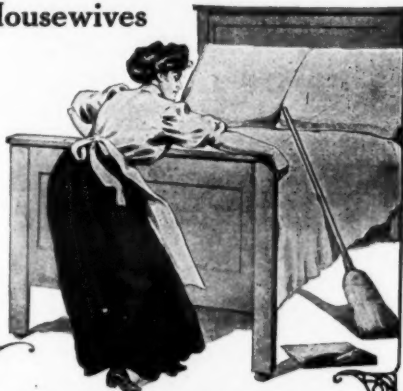
PRICE, \$1.25

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STREET & SMITH, Publishers, New York

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Full of Meaning to Housewives



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Bissell

"Cyclo" BALL BEARING Sweeper

you will regret the sacrifice you made in going without it for so many years.

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Buy now of your dealer, send us the purchase slip within one week from date of purchase, and you will receive FREE a good quality leather card case with no printing on it.

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BISSELL CARPET SWEEPER CO.

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(Largest and Only Exclusive Carpet Sweeper Makers in the World.)



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Giving complete instruction how to develop the

ARMS, CHEST AND SHOULDERS.



It is valuable for men, women or children and contains twenty original half-tone illustrations; an encyclopedia of information, explicit and concise, and a quick method for development. For Men Only, Young or Old. My chart entitled

Rules and Regulations of Strict Training.

giving diet for each day of the week and explicit directions showing you how to double your strength and endurance, increase your weight and develop your muscles quickly. Regular price \$1.00. Will be sent to anyone mailing ten cents in stamps or coin. Send at once while they last. Enclose 2c. stamp for particulars.

PROF. HENRY TITUS

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Greatest Instructor of Physical Culture in America. Also Best Equipped Gym. in America. Hot and Cold Baths.

50c Per Pair for Pure Silk

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hose made of **Hose**
cotton lisle or coarse
yarns when you can buy genuine
silk half-hose at 50c.

Phoenix PURE SILK HOSE

are genuine silk—every thread is guaranteed to be the purest cocoon silk—heel, toe, top and body. The heels and toes are reinforced by our exclusive Duo-Weave process imparting remarkable wearing qualities.

Phoenix Silk Half Hose are seamless. They are the first genuine cocoon silk half-hose to sell at 50c. The purchase of the silk output of several mills enables us to reduce manufacturing cost.

The exquisite, light, soft, lustrous texture of Phoenix Silk Hose is a decided contrast with the hard, coarse, common hose of mixed yarns that sell at the same price.

Phoenix Silk Hose are not mercerized cotton, or silk and cotton mixed, but every pair is guaranteed pure silk throughout.

Ask your dealer first for Phoenix Hose, but, if not easily obtainable, we will fill your order direct and give you an absolute guarantee that every thread of these socks is pure silk, or money refunded.

A trial will convince you of the excellent wearing qualities of Phoenix Silk Hose. You will never go back to common hose when you can get pure silk ones like the Phoenix for 50c a pair.

Can be had in the following colors: black, tan, maroon, green, grey, taupe, burgundy, navy and helio. Six pairs, plain or assorted colors, in handsome box, prepaid \$3.00, or 50c per pair—sold with a positive guarantee for wear. If not as represented money will be refunded. State size and color wanted.

Phoenix Pure Silk Knitted Neckties to match hose, 50c each.

All Silk, Pure Silk and Nothing But Silk



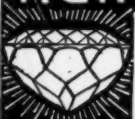
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\$7.20 SOLID GOLD RING
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SOLID GOLD SCREW STUD

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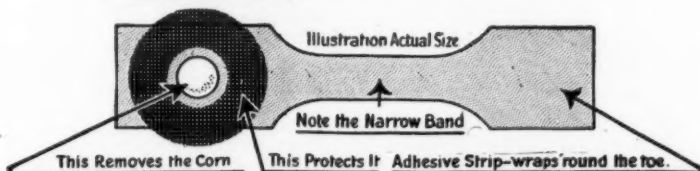
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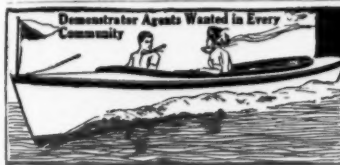
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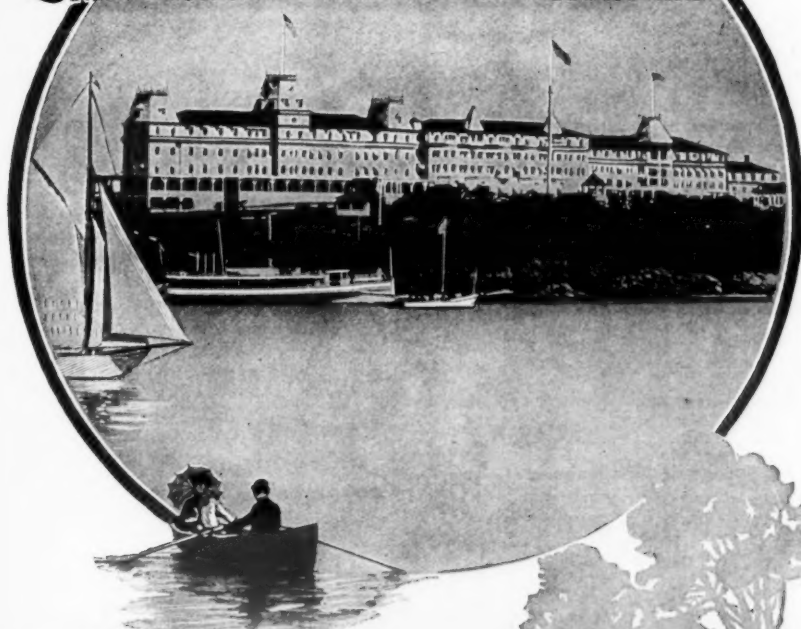
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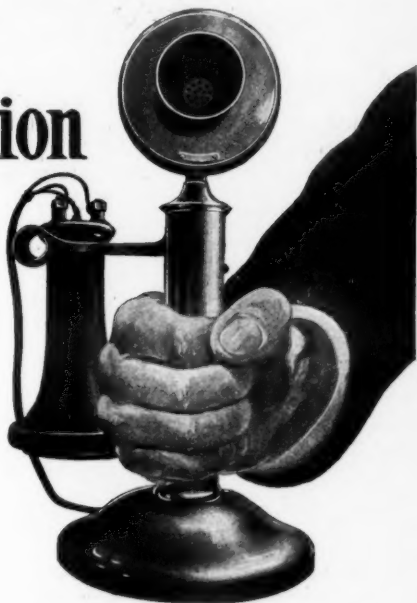
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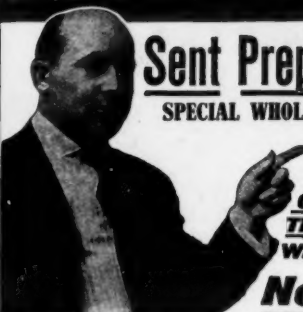
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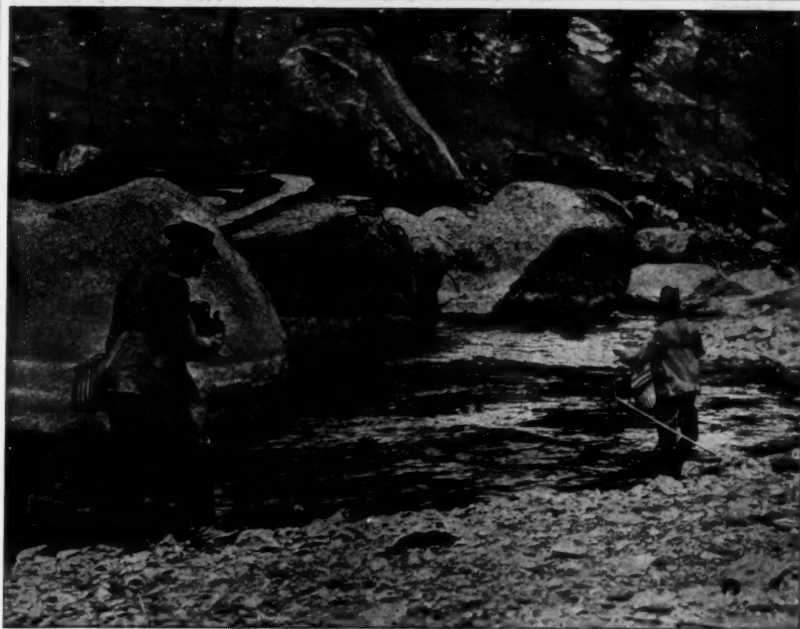


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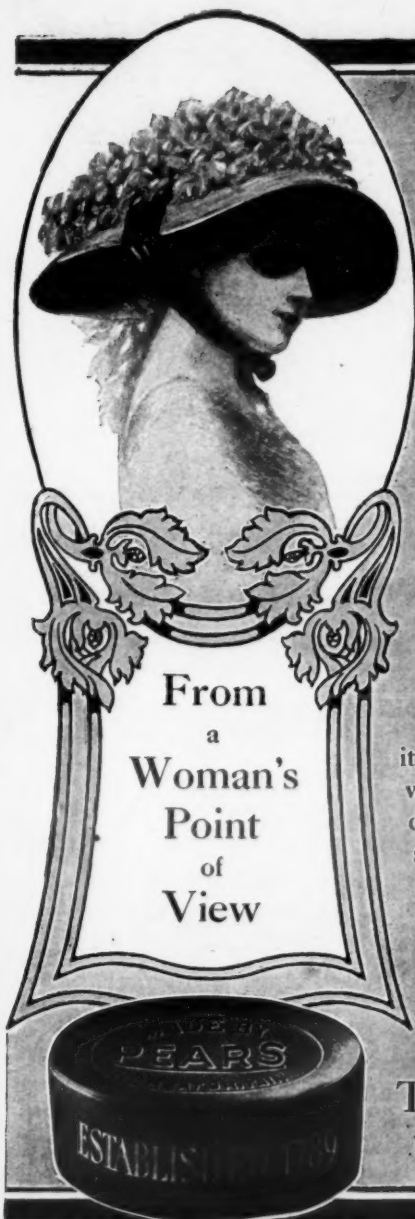
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Each morning shaves his beard,
The tender skin of cheek and chin
Has always clean appeared.
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